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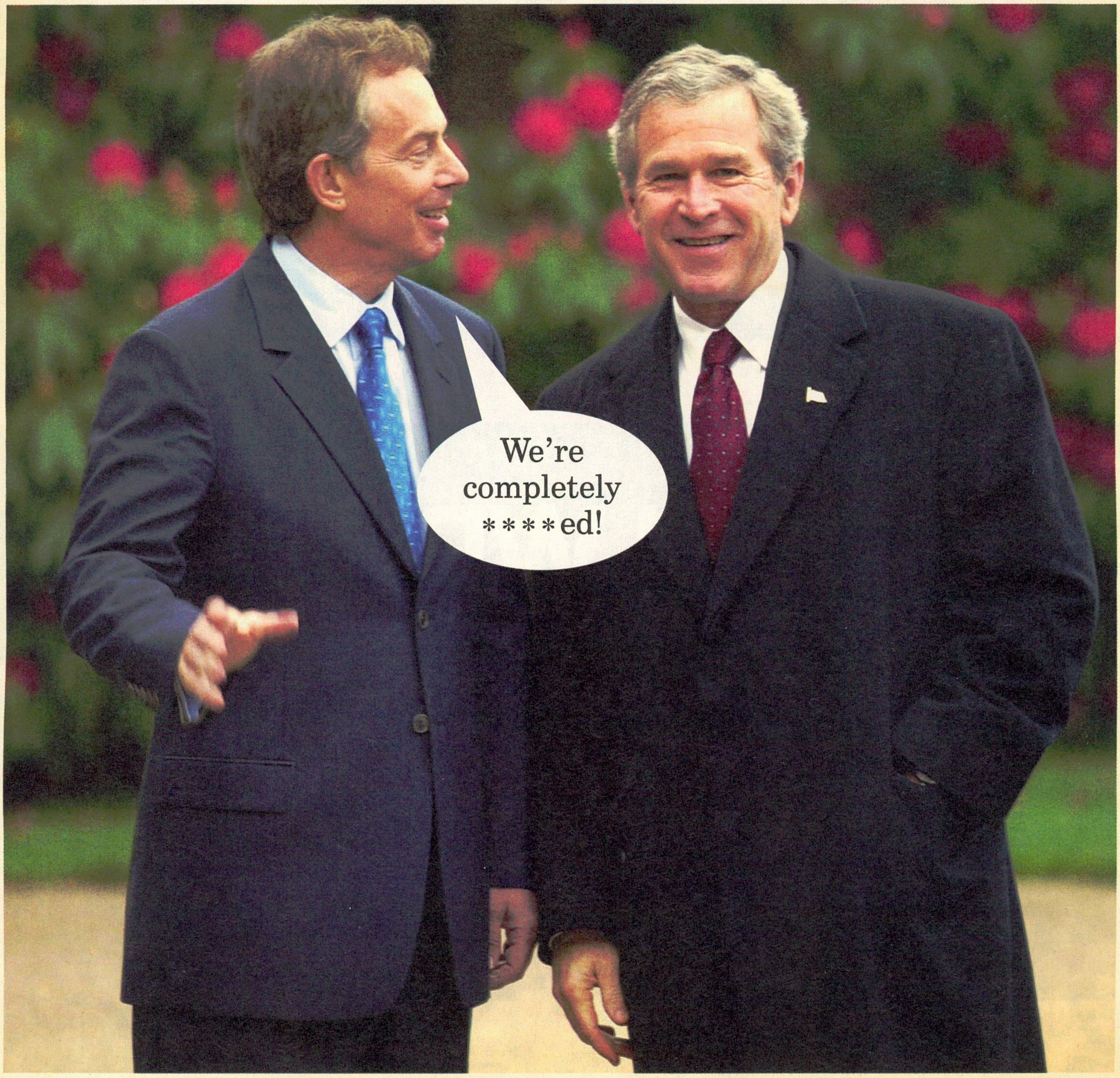
PRIVATE EYE

Inside:
EDUCATION SPECIAL!
The Secret Diary of a School Teacher

POSH AND TEX – IS IT OVER?



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A Statement From The Chairman

THE distressing news that Mr and Mrs Beckham's marriage is in trouble will inevitably give rise to queries about the suitability of the England captain as the public face of Gnomaphone.

Is he an ideal role model for impressionable young persons to look up to?

The answer is unequivocable – Yes. Mr Beckham and his friend Ms Loos have demonstrated beyond question the usefulness of our telecommunications devices for sending obscene messages speedily and effectively. They have proved that we at Gnomaphone have pioneered exciting new technologies for the 21st Century to revolutionise personal relationships on an intimate basis.

Far from distancing ourselves from Mr Beckham, we would like to endorse his imaginative response to the possibilities of exploring the digital age.

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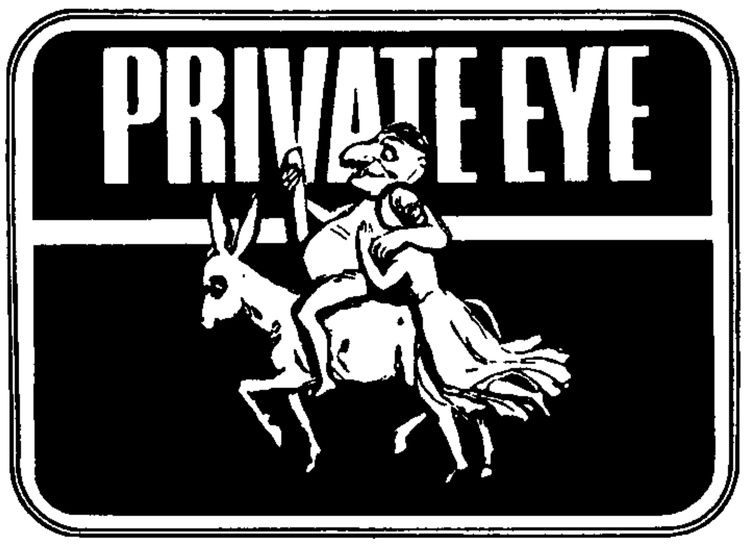

Secret Diary of a School Teacher
8-page special – see inside
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AFTER home office immigration minister Beverley Hughes resigned having "unwittingly" misled parliament, SNP MP Alex Salmond was quick to join the fray.

"If it has become a resignation matter inadvertently to mislead parliament and the people over the home office and immigration, why is it not a resignation matter inadvertently to mislead parliament and the people over weapons of mass destruction and Iraq?"

Leader of the Commons Peter Hain replied: "Quite simply because there was no misleading involved on the question of Iraq." No indeed.

WITH the cabinet still deeply divided about the merits of ID cards in the fight against terrorism and illegal immigration, it's interesting to note that the cards' main proponent, home secretary David Blunkett, is already employing 32 people on the project, including six contracted consultants.

Perhaps they would be better employed trying to track down the 7,000 security passes that went missing or were stolen from staff at Westminster and other government offices last year to ensure they did not fall into the wrong hands.

In answer to a series of parliamentary questions from Lib Dem MP Mark Oaten, it was revealed that more than 3,000 went missing (90 were believed stolen) from MoD premises around the country.

WHAT did John Major mean when as prime minister he urged us all to get "back to basics"?

Did he mean we should all behave better in bed? After Edwina Currie, surely not. Or did he mean that we should adhere to elementary financial rules?

If it was the latter, his cabinet colleague John Wakeham obviously transgressed when he was a member of the audit committee of Enron, where accounting errors led to disgrace and bankruptcy.

But wait. The accounts of another international company have got into such disarray that the business has collapsed with massive holes in its pension funds. Its name? Mayflower plc. And can you guess the name of the most famous director on its audit committee? Right again. Mr Back to Basics himself, the Rt Hon John Major.

WITH Greg Dyke, Gavyn Davies and Alastair Campbell all having departed from the scene, the likelihood of any further confrontation between the BBC and the government appeared to be dramatically reduced. But that was before the appointments of Howell James as the government's new communications chief and Michael Grade as BBC chairman.

The two first locked antlers when James, then John Birt's chief spin doctor in BBC corporate affairs, briefed against Grade after his 1992 McTaggart lecture at Edinburgh. Grade had used the speech to launch a withering attack on Birtism and Birtspeak: "The latest jargon inside of the BBC speaks of 'downsizing', 'delayering' and 'out-sourcing': that's closure, redundancies and dark studios to you and me."

James, ever His Master's Voice, issued a press release arguing that "Michael Grade caricatures some of the ideas that have been discussed without properly considering the arguments behind them. He seemingly offers only that the BBC should respond to change by staying the same."

Since James's mentor Birt, the colleague with whom Grade famously fell out, also works in government, it would be rash to bet on any improvement in relations between No 10 and Broadcasting House.

JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

24 March: DTI launches £2.5m scheme to boost call centre industry in UK

2 April: DTI extends Telephone Preference Service to save small businesses from "the real burden of unwanted cold calls"

SIXTEEN years after they were first linked to an arms deal which brought down an Indian government, the wealthy and influential Hinduja brothers will finally stand trial next month on charges of "criminal conspiracy" and "cheating" (*Eyes passim*).

New Delhi's chief metropolitan magistrate (CMM) framed the new charges while fixing a trial date starting on 12 May. British citizens Srichand and Gopichand and their brother Prakash, who is a Swiss citizen, face seven-year jail terms if found guilty.

Long before Peter Mandelson was forced to resign from office over Srichand Hinduja's passport application, all three brothers were involved in one of the biggest scandals to hit modern India: allegations that the trio received £4.5m from Swedish arms company Bofors for persuading the Indian government to buy 410 field guns in a billion-dollar deal in 1986. The scandal was the focus of the 1989 elections in which Rajiv Gandhi lost power.

The brothers continue to deny that money paid into their Swiss bank accounts was commission for brokering the deal. Commissions on defence deals are illegal in India.

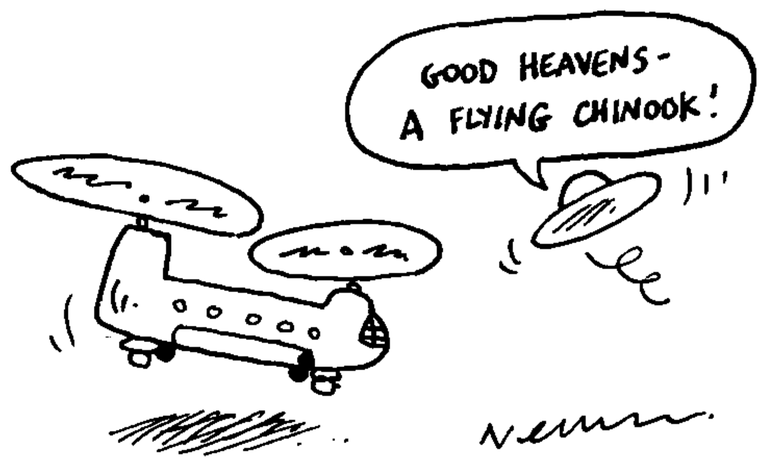
JUST FANCY THAT!

"Young will pay for obesity epidemic"

— Daily Express, *26 March, page 13.*

"FREE KIDS MEAL FOR EVERY READER AT BURGER KING"

— Daily Express, *26 March, page 14.*



Street of Shame

BUCKINGHAM Palace's tiff with the *Sun* over king-paparazzo Jason Fraser's shots of Prince William and his ski-partner prompted shock and outrage from some unlikely guardians of the nation's morals.

"The *Daily Express* is respecting the wishes of Prince William by choosing not to publish snatched pictures of him with fellow student Kate Middleton in Klosters," the paper solemnly announced on 2 April, denying all interest in "the sneaky paparazzi shots". The *Daily Sport* went even further, with a signed editorial by publisher David "the Slug" Sullivan: "Almost seven years ago the Press made solemn promises that they would not hound the Royals following the death of Princess Diana… *Sunday Sport* and *Daily Sport* don't destroy people's lives through intrusion and harassment. And you have my guarantee it will stay that way!"

Wise words – and ones that are only slightly devalued by coming from the respective publishers of *Celebrity Adult Spy* and *Sex Lives of the Rich and Famous*, two top-shelf mags which rely entirely on long-lens pics of topless celebrities and glimpses of famous knickers from red carpet level, er, snatch-shots in every sense of the word.

Naturally the fact that both the *Express* and *Sport* are so strapped for cash they cannot afford Fraser's exorbitant prices has nothing to do with it.

FORMER classmates of Kate Middleton have received a letter from *Sunday Mirror* hackette Sara Nuwar.

"Lots of people are now keen to know what Prince William's girlfriend is really like and as an ex-schoolfriend at the [*sic*] Marlborough College you may be able to shed light on this," she writes. "If you have any fond memories or anecdotes about Kate or wish to say anything at all on the subject please do not hesitate to drop me a line or call me."

Perhaps aware that Middleton's friends may not be in the habit of talking to sleazy Sunday tabloids, Nuwar hastily adds this reassurance: "I know you may feel slightly uncomfortable talking to the press but please let me state that the *Sunday Mirror*, unlike our rivals, is not trying to dig up negative stories."

Oo… perish the thought!

MORE on the pro-war propaganda initiative which led so many British newspapers to publish so much tosh about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction in the run-up to the war in Iraq.

As the last *Eye* reported, British newspapers including the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Observer*, *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph* and others ran stories based on information provided by a ragtag of Iraqi defectors put up by the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the body run by Ahmed Chalabi. The INC, it has now been revealed in the US, has been receiving $4m a year from the US government for an "information collection programme". Justifying its appeal for continued funding, the INC has boasted of the many news stories (many of them false) that it has been able to place in western media.

In the US, John Kerry, the Democrat presidential candidate, has now persuaded the US general accounting office to launch an inquiry into the payments on the grounds that it would be illegal for the INC to use official US funds for propaganda aimed at the American people. Any funded information was supposed only to go to the US security forces.

The INC debacle and Kerry's response to it have been fully covered in the US press, but not so far in the UK by any of the publications who ran the INC-inspired stories. Perhaps they've been too busy covering the more important matter of the Beckhams' marriage.

AS Rebecca Loos, the Beckhams, Max Clifford, Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all have their say on what may or may not have happened in Madrid, one body unlikely to get involved is the press complaints commission (PCC).

Last November the Beckhams complained to the PCC about a front-page story in the *Sunday Mirror* which claimed their marriage was, in the words of the headline, "ALL OVER". Solicitors for the Beckhams alleged 16 inaccuracies, chief among which was that their marriage was not all over. *Sunday Mirror* editor Tina Weaver promptly offered to print a retraction of the story and an apology on page 2 of the paper – though she maintained rather peculiarly that "the newspaper had no reason to doubt the truth of the information supplied".

But this was not enough for the Beckhams, who demanded the right to draft their own apology and have it printed on the front page, along with photos of the two of them – presumably because not enough of those appear in the papers already. At this point the PCC decided to get tough and, er, wash its hands of the whole affair, announcing at the end of February that "there was no satisfactory way of proceeding with the complaint" and that it should cease to deal with it.

Despite the paper's offer to withdraw its accusations, and the undeniable fact that whatever else they might be up to, the Beckhams remain married, the commission declared itself "not in a position to decide whether the references to the state of the Beckhams' marriage at that time were accurate". A fine example of the "strong, effective and independent self regulation" that PCC chairman Sir Christopher Meyer likes to boast of!

Warballs

"Our car is that BMW [645Ci], just launched in convertible guise. This should be a very happy drive, but there is a cloud beyond those looming inland: two days earlier, Al-Qaeda visited terror on Madrid. Our 645Ci is black: coincidental, but fitting." — Test-drive report from the motoring section of the *Independent*.

"Maybe it has something to do with the way the world changed after 11 September but, suddenly, the public seemed to be responding to a work of art that offered awe, drama, scale and beauty, not simply blood and gore. I'm not denigrating the art of the 1990s, just observing that that giddy decade feels as distant as *La Belle Epoque*." — Richard Dorment on the Saatchi collection, *Daily Telegraph*.

MICHAEL Grade "dragged television into the gutter during his nine years as head of Channel 4", producing "a relentless stream of grubby sexploitation programmes that trampled on every norm of broadcasting decency".

So said the *Daily Mail* two weeks ago in a leader written by editor Paul Dacre himself, desperately trying to stop the "pornographer-in-chief" from becoming BBC chairman. "It speaks volumes for the decline in public standards that Michael Grade is even on the short list," Dacre raged.

At least Grade's "sexploitation" went out after the watershed. The *Mail*, allegedly a family newspaper, has no such inhibitions. Last Monday it described the "highly charged and explosive sex" allegedly enjoyed by David Beckham and Rebecca Loos, alongside transcripts of their "explicit text messages". ("U made me so horny… U should see me naked with only a white cotton G-string… I want to hear you groan and moan… I want to hear you scream.")

But then Dacre's rampant readers expect nothing less. On 31 March, two days before Michael Grade's appointment, the whole of page three was given over to the "raunchiest photographs to date" of Carol Vorderman. "One picture shows her in a pink Burberry mac open to reveal a corset, fishnet stockings and suspender belt," the *Mail* slavered. "Another has her in high heels, provocatively stroking an outstretched leg." The previous day there was an even raunchier shot: "Wearing just knickers, a bra, stockings and suspenders as she kisses a male dancer, this is Britney Spears's new stage routine… She arrived on stage by sliding down a fireman's pole. She and the male dancer were soon frolicking on a bed, touching each other all over." Three days before *that* the paper had a 2,500-word interview with a call-girl, describing her "maelstrom of sexual obsession". Earlier in March there was a full-page discussion of David Bailey's "sultry portrait" of a scantily clad Carole Caplin. "This look is very Samantha from *Sex and the City* – seductive and provocative," one expert opined.

Ah yes, *Sex and the City*. Distraught when the show ended last month, the *Mail* consoled itself by commissioning a series from Amanda Platell imagining what might happen next to the characters. A sample: "Charlotte was on her knees, doggy style… He started to undo the fasteners on the back of her Versace basque."

Other delights from the past month include a 2,000-word feature on a group called "Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous"; a full account by former Hussar Angela McConnell of her sexual flings with fellow-officers; and of course an exhaustive feature on the prostitute blogger Belle de Jour ("She arrived at his flat in Chelsea Harbour in her trademark stockings and stilettos… knickers… thongs" etc). And on 2 March it cleared two pages to pose the big question: "SEX: Is it all in a woman's mind?"

Of course not: it's all in Paul Dacre's throbbing organ.

ALTHOUGH the *Daily Mail* admitted it had previously been critical of Michael Grade, it did not actually accredit the "pornographer in chief" nickname which, it noted, he had earned during his years at Channel 4.

Could this reticence have anything to do with its embarrassment that the *Mail* columnist responsible for the accolade, a certain Paul Johnson, was himself exposed not long after as an ardent fan of the sins of the flesh, and has scarcely written a word for the paper since?

Oddly enough, while Grade was running Channel 4, Paul Johnson learned that his own daughter Sophie was looking for a job in TV. The great *Mail* moraliser immediately recommended that she seek advice from, er, Michael Grade.

1 (1) LIFE FOR RENT • DILDO
2 (2) ELEPHUNK • BLACK EYED PEAS
3 (–) CALL OFF THE SEARCH • KATIE MELLIA

Orkney Today

"GOOD Evans! Billie Piper hits the town without hubby Chris... but with a mystery fella in tow," the *News of the Screws* revealed on 28 March. While Billie partied with the mystery fella in London, Chris Evans was away boozing in Portugal, "fuelling fears of marriage woes. The pair haven't been out together for a month".

All most alarming for *Screws* readers who care about such things. But reassurance was instantly available. In the paper's colour magazine the same day, under the heading "Nuptial Bliss", was a special feature on "one of the strongest marriages in showbiz" – a couple who "have stuck by each other through thick and thin". Indeed, it continued, "as Billie and Chris prepare to celebrate their [third] anniversary in May, they're considering renewing their wedding vows and thinking about starting a family!"

THE *Mail on Sunday*'s financial section, scourge of fat-cats everywhere, is having to indulge in some belt-tightening of its own.

"Following a review of costs across all areas of the *Mail on Sunday*, we are going to have to start cutting back," wrote editor Lisa Buckingham in an email to staff at the end of March. "I do not want to discourage people going out to lunch to get stories but lunches for freelance contributors etc should, in future, be kept to an absolute minimum... I feel we can make savings on the wine bill by taking advantage of slightly cheaper vintages than we have become used to."

Buckingham, who regularly devotes her own weekly column to the "rewards for failure" enjoyed in the City and the ineffectiveness of financial regulators, added her own analysis of the situation. "Frankly, with the long drawn out dearth of advertising in the section, I'm rather surprised this hasn't happened sooner. I think it far preferable that we try to do it rather than lay ourselves open to having a load of accountants start crawling all over us."

FURTHER EDUCATION

DISCORD between the two bodies which run Reading University over the future of its music department.

Last summer the senate (the university's academic authority) voted, two to one, to "ensure the continued teaching of music". However, the council (which has the ultimate management say-so although it is supposed to be guided by senate) has acted on a paper from the university's redundancy working group and has ruled that the music staff should be reduced.

Students are still being accepted for the course beginning this September, but things are so uncertain that, on the council's orders, no one is being allowed to defer entry until 2005 as there may not be a first year intake next year.

The university has promised to consult and take into account the department's importance to the musical life of the university and to Reading itself; but staff are already fuming – and looking at plans for the expensive new olympic-sized university swimming pool with despair.

A final decision will be made in July.

A CHRISTIAN group at Hull university is considering legal action after the student union voted to prevent it from excluding non-Christians from its committee.

The student union refused to ratify the society's constitution on the grounds that a clause in it which said only Christians would be allowed to join the committee breached the equal opportunities act.

Both sides admit that no non-Christian has ever tried to join the committee or the society as a whole, and that it is unlikely any non-Christian will want to do so in the future. But this has not stopped them coming to blows.

Simon Livesey, vice-president of the Christian group, said it was a matter of principle that "Christians be led by Christians" and it was necessary to stipulate this in the constitution. A student union spokesman said that all societies had to follow the rules relating to equality of opportunities. A court case looms.

HACKWATCH

Shome Mishtakes

FOR THE last two years the *Independent*'s media section has been running a "My Greatest Mistake" column, which gives eminent hacks the chance to admit that they aren't perfect but, well, at least they can laugh at themselves.

Rather like a bank robber pleading guilty to a charge of pick-pocketing, however, some of the Fourth Estate's worst offenders have chosen to offer up piffling indiscretions to distract attention from more serious crimes.

9 April 2002: The column kicks off with Amanda Platell. "The thing I regret throughout my career is not negotiating a better package for myself," she reveals, "when I was marketing director at the Mirror Group." Strangely, Platell believes this ranks as a greater mistake than her intrusive story about Peter Mandelson's love life which led to her dismissal from the editor's chair at the *Sunday Express*. And what of her period as William Hague's spin doctor, when the pair of them managed to steer the Tories to a second successive landslide defeat? Clearly not worth a mention.

21 May: Boris Johnson recalls his days as a cub reporter on the *Times* when he wrongly attributed a quote to his godfather, historian Colin Lucas. "Of all the mistakes I've made, I think that takes the biscuit." Really? Even more biscuit-worthy than not sacking Taki from the *Spectator*? Boris also ignores the 1990 conversation with his fraudster mate Darius Guppy, who wished to hire a hitman to beat up a *News of the World* reporter and asked Boris to provide the hack's address. "OK Darrie," Boris replied. "I said I'll do it and I'll do it. Don't worry."

6 August: Ladmag editor James Brown harks back to his time in the record industry, when he and a colleague once blew a great money-spinning opportunity after drinking 10 bottles of wine and running up a £4,000 bill at dinner. Has alcohol really addled Brown's memory so much that he can't remember the issue of *GQ* in 1999 when he nominated Erwin Rommel as one of the 20th century's style icons? Publisher Condé Nast thought it so clever it sacked him.

17 September: The *Sun*'s Voice of Yoof, Emma Jones, cites her stint as PA to Nigel Kennedy, who ended up sacking her. Viewers of BBC1 might prefer to nominate Jones's disastrous appearance on *Question Time*, in which she managed to confuse the CIA with the CID and noted that "new" Labour "hope to concentrate more on policy than they do on substance", as well as sharing such profound insights as "I love footballers". The BBC switchboard was jammed with complaints about this vacuous performance, which one critic described as "not so much car-crash TV as a 24-car pile up".

8 October: *New Statesman* editor Peter Wilby once enjoyed a lunch with education minister Reg Prentice, during which Prentice let slip a hot scoop. Unfortunately, Wilby got so pissed he couldn't remember what it was until he saw it on the front page of the *Times* a fortnight later. Clearly, alcohol has the same effect on Wilby's memory as it does on James Brown's: only nine months before his "My Greatest Mistake" piece he was forced to apologise publicly to the Jewish community for his infamous *NS* front cover alleging a "Kosher Conspiracy".

25 February 2003: "To relive my worst mistake still brings a blush of shame and horror to my cheeks," shudders political columnist Peter Oborne. Would that be the time he fell into the Thames after a particularly long Westminster lunch, and had to walk to the Savoy Tailors' Guild, dripping wet, to buy a replacement set of clothes? No. Instead we get a humdrum account of how he travelled to Copenhagen to cover a referendum, went to bed early and slept through a riot.

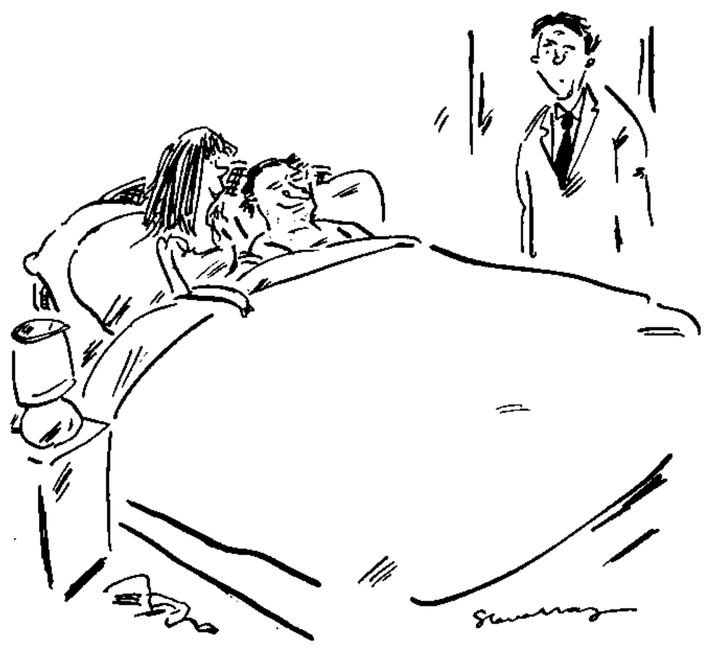
11 August: "It was the biggest balls-up of my career, and I'm still not sure how I got away with it." That's how Sky News's head of foreign news Adrian Wells describes a production cock-up that befell him while working at the BBC. His interview appears just three weeks after the revelation that one of his reporters at Sky News falsely claimed to have been present during a missile launch on board a Royal Navy submarine, but Wells clearly doesn't want any association with that particular balls-up.

20 January 2004: "The worst mistake I ever made was listening to someone who said that I wouldn't like working in television," says ITN newscaster Nicholas Owen. "I'm only sorry that I spent 10 years not sure I would be any good at it, and that I didn't bite the bullet and take a risk sooner." But he certainly made up for it once he did join the fray. Who, apart from Owen himself, can forget his appearance on Chris Morris's notorious *Brass Eye* paedophilia special when he was duped into warning the public against a ludicrously bogus computer game called Pantou the dog? "Singapore police have given us these pictures," he announced. "This man has plugged his groin into his computer to get sexual pleasure from the actions of a child playing with Pantou."

24 February: It's the turn of another ITN man, Mark Austin, whose recklessness in pursuit of a story in South Africa once led him and his cameraman into a mob of irate Afrikaners. It must have been another Mark Austin, then, who made the far greater mistake of fronting ITV's pisspoor reality series *Survivor*, which endured critical derision and disastrous ratings before being quietly dropped.

30 March: James Hipwell, editor of gambling magazine *Inside Edge*, reminisces about his days as one of the *Daily Mirror*'s City Slickers. "I ended up writing about companies I owned shares in, and that's against Press Complaints commission rules," he admits. "I should have just reported on the market, but I got caught up with it." As did Piers Morgan, he adds. Unlike Moron, however, Hipwell was "fired for gross misconduct for breaking the PCC rules on share dealing for journalists. It took me a couple of years to get back into publishing after that."

Quite incredible. For once, an interviewee has truthfully confessed to his crime. Shome mishtake, shurely?



"Hello Darling...well you know... I'm a people person..."

THE NEOPHILIACS

"As sure as green is the new pink, so zhooshy is the new fabulous, the word used to convey style approval." — Jess Cartner-Morley, *Guardian*.

"Is Colonel Gadafy the next Terence Conran?" — *Guardian*.

"Public health is going to be next year's rock'n'roll — except, of course, the chances are that only politicians and health professionals will notice." — *Nursing Times*.

"Plain is the new glamour." – The *Times*.

WHY Romania? That was the real question to arise after Tony Blair's emergency "immigration summit" which still failed to adequately explain how entry requirements for Romanian migrants to Britain have become so lax.

Oddly, similar problems involving one-legged Bulgarian or Slovakian roofers who leapfrog (sic) immigration queues have not surfaced. And while it's curious that neither Tory leader Michael Howard nor shadow home secretary David Davis have questioned Blair on his close relations with his Romanian counterpart Adrian Nastase, both Tories have hinted at some deal between the two.

The suggestion is that the deal would allow Romanian migrants easier entry to Britain as a quid pro quo for greater Romanian control over illegal asylum seekers. Following recent talks between the Blair and Nastase, the latter paid credit publicly to Britain for facilitating a new openness and for allowing some Romanians new opportunities to work overseas.

In fact links between Blair and Nastase go back further – most memorably to February 2002, when Blair wrote to Nastase in support of billionaire Labour party donor and steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal, who wanted to buy Romania's nationalised steel industry. In his letter Blair hinted that Nastase's backing for the buy-out would help smooth the way for eventual Romanian EU membership.

Mittal's offshore-based conglomerate, LNM, had received £2.3m in UK government grants; and shortly after Blair's intervention Nastase signed a draft agreement for the £300m sale of Sidex, the state steel company that employed 600,000 workers and was responsible for 4 percent of Romania's economic output.

At the time Blair was at pains to declare that Mittal's LNM conglomerate was a "British-based company" although it employed barely a handful of British-based administrators. But then Lakshmi Mittal had been kind enough to stump up £125,000 when "new" Labour's coffers looked extremely bare after the last general election.

Could there be a link between one-legged Romanian roofers getting easy access to Britain and the Blair-Mittal-Nastase axis? We really should be told…

DUNCAN SMITH VERDICT

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown's "Barker" report showed Britain's housing shortage is very serious. But how did things get so bad?

Now that council house-building has practically stopped, existing local authority homes are being transferred to "registered social landlords". These housing associations make up Labour's main house-building strategy; but their results are dismal. Registered social landlords have built even fewer houses under Tony Blair than they did under John Major – less than half the number built under the Tories.

Until late last year the Housing Corporation, which is supposed to oversee housing associations, was chaired by Brenda Dean. She got the job thanks to her good relations with Tony (she was a trustee of the "blind" trust which handled rich donors' gifts to the would-be PM's office when he was in opposition). Dean has now demonstrated her solid commitment to social housing by leaving the Housing Corporation to become… a director of private house-builder George Wimpey.

The "new" Labour view that council houses are bad and housing associations are good has led to charges of privatization. Though the shift has failed to put new roofs over people's heads, not everyone is unhappy. Transferring properties from council control generates lots of cash for consultants and advisers.

For example, Hacas Chapman Hendy is a housing consultancy whose work on council house transfers and for the new "registered social landlords" has grown massively thanks to Labour policy. No wonder its grateful director Jeff Zitron donated £11,000 to the party. Labour has helped Hacas so much that last June Zitron was able to sell his shareholding in the firm to the Tribal group for £8.6m.

MINISTERS talk plenty of hogwash about policy consultation but farming ministers have been caught out telling porkies.

Back in 2001, as farming was reeling from the foot and mouth disease outbreak, agriculture ministers slapped a ban on the use of pigswill, claiming the use of catering waste in animal food was a hazard.

The decision was put out to consultation; and in April 2001 the then MAFF minister Nick Brown said that out of 150 responses "nearly all" favoured a ban. Asked in parliament in 2002 about the consultation, the secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs Margaret Beckett said the "majority of respondents" were in favour. Later that year Eliot Morley was asked the same question and gave the weaselly reply: "A minority objected to the proposed ban."

But truth will out. Last month animal welfare minister Ben Bradshaw was again asked about the consultation. His reply? "Responses were not clear cut as the consultation asked a number of questions but, taking account of all the responses, there were 37 percent against the ban, 32 percent in favour and 31 percent expressing no preference."

So 32 percent is "nearly all" and "a majority"? An interesting approach to maths and democracy.

WHEN foreign secretary Jack Straw was asked about the bugging of the United Nations, he avoided answering by claiming the issues were all sub-judice pending the official secrets act trial of whistleblowing GCHQ translator Katherine Gunn.

The questions put by MP Neil Gerrard, chair of the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group, still need answering: was the surveillance legal and were GCHQ staff doing the bidding of the US National Security Agency? So, the *Eye* asked, what excuse has the foreign secretary for reticence now that the attorney-general has dropped the official secrets act charges?

"It is the well-established and longstanding practice of successive governments not to respond to speculation about alleged operational activities by the UK Security and Intelligence Services… and not to comment on details of the intelligence relationship between the UK and US."

LESS than four weeks before the long-awaited expansion of the European Union on 1 May, the government has finally decided how to deal with asylum seekers from the new eastern European countries who are already resident here and going through the asylum process supported by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

Irrespective of their asylum status, the merits of their claim or the length of time they have been in the UK, they are apparently to be deemed "benefit shoppers" – and therefore not entitled to any benefits, housing or further support.

They will be given a few days to quit their homes and find alternative accommodation and a job (unless they have children, in which case the local authority will have to house them under the children's act); or quit the country.

No doubt our learned friends at the bar are rubbing their hands in glee.

LUCKY members of Pimlico & St James Labour party recently received an interesting notice from their officers.

"We are to hold a special meeting in 10 Downing Street. Due to the location the meeting will NOT be an all members' meeting but a list of attendants to be invited will be drawn up. The branch last met in Downing Street last year as guests of party member Cherie Blair when they held a discussion on Pimlico School and Asylum Seekers followed by a tour of Number 10."

Funnily enough the specially drawn up list failed to include any of the branch's troublemakers and lefties.

TONY BLAIR has consistently pledged financial support to fight the "scourge" of HIV/Aids. A shame then that one effect of the government's decision to take aid from poor countries to pay for the disaster that is Iraq will be to stop funding highly successful sexual health projects.

In Honduras, for example, which has the highest rates of HIV in South America, the department for international development (DFID) has been backing two projects to help those on the ground establish a network of HIV clinics, run training programmes and access funds from the "Global Health Fund". DFID opened its office in Honduras only two years ago after the country was devastated by Hurricane Mitch (8,000 dead, 1.5m homeless, its cash crops destroyed) and now it is to close.

Honduras is one of 21 countries affected by the government's decision to reshuffle its aid budget in favour of Iraq. Honduras has been deemed poor, but not poor enough to continue to receive funding even though nearly half the population survive on less than £1.20 a day and one in five on 60p a day.

TORY hopeful James Brokenshire, who is standing in Hornchurch at the next general election, was cock-a-hoop at the flurry of press attention that greeted shadow health secretary Andrew Lansley's visit to hospitals in the area. "I was delighted that Andrew Lansley was able to spend the afternoon talking to local health staff and seeing the work that goes on for himself," he warbled. "I was particularly pleased by his comments about St George's Hospital in Hornchurch."

The local *Havering Yellow Advertiser* was keen to talk up the Lansley visit too, reporting that the shadow minister had visited St George's, spoken to staff and objected to the "closure plan". In fact St George's isn't facing closure, although an extensive consultation on health services in the borough is being undertaken by the local health trust.

Even more intriguingly, Lansley did *not* visit St George's Hospital or speak to staff. Apologising to Hornchurch's Labour MP John Cryer in parliament, Lansley limply explained that he had briefly stopped for "a photo opportunity" outside the hospital – and the reason he had broken parliamentary protocol and failed to tell the local MP that he was visiting his constituency was because he had dropped by to see his parents.

PFI SPECIAL: MONEY DOWN THE BASIN

ON THE afternoon of 22 March Karen Buck, Blairite Labour MP for Regents Park and Kensington North, hosted a high-powered reception at the Commons.

Among the distinguished guests were National Health Service chieftains Baroness Hanham (Tory), chair of the St Mary's NHS Trust, and Lord Newton (also a Tory), chair of the Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust, along with their chief executives. The purpose of the meeting was to promote the most expensive private finance initiative (PFI) proposal in the NHS: the plan to build three new hospitals on a single site in the Paddington basin.

The invitation to the reception – sent out by the PR company Christows – said the project "will provide patients with a full range of acute hospital care alongside specialist care for those with heart and lung conditions". There was no mention of the rocketing cost of the project (up from an original estimate of £380m to nearly £900m) nor of the astonishing rise in the cost of "external advisers" (including Christows) before planning permission has even been granted. Last year the costs of those advisers rose at the rate of a quarter of a million pounds a month to £5.6m. As John Randall, Tory MP for Uxbridge, put it in the House of Commons on March 23: "Seldom has so little been done by so many at such great cost to the public purse."

Nor were invitations sent to the many critics of the Paddington basin proposal. From the outset the plans have been vigorously opposed by the campaign group Heart of Harefield, which objects in particular to closure of Harefield hospital in the Middlesex countryside near Watford.

When the new development was first mooted in 2000, it inspired a stream of protests from community health councils, set up by a former Labour government to monitor changes in health services on behalf of local communities. One of the strongest objections to the Paddington health campus project came from the South West Herts community health council, whose report concluded: "The proposals for the move of Harefield heart and lung services from Harefield have not taken adequate account of the needs of the patients in SW Herts. As a result, there is little support from the local population for such proposals."

This objection was sent to the relevant authority – Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster health authority – by the full-time salaried chief officer of the SW Herts community health council, Mr Barrie Taylor. It was sent on from there to the government where it was duly brushed aside by health Minister John Hutton. The South West Herts CHC, like all the other CHCs, has since been wound up by a government that grew fed up with the councils doing the job they were set up to do.

FACT TO REMEMBER: Barrie Taylor is married to Karen Buck MP, the enthusiastic promoter of the hospital project his council so enthusiastically opposed.

"Since when have the contract cleaners been doing bed baths...?

WHO decides what to do with the many billions of pounds invested in pension funds? The answer is: a small group of managers and trustees.

An indication of how well qualified they are for the task emerged in a report written for chancellor Gordon Brown back in March 2001 by Paul Mynors, a former chairman of Gartmore Asset Management, which manages pension funds. The report indicated that most pension fund managers don't know their arses from their elbows and called for a course of intensive "education" to solve this problem.

Three years on, no such course has materialised and senior ministers are not impressed. On 30 March, the chief of the National Association of Pension Funds, Christine Farnish, and a number of trustees' representatives were summoned before a staggeringly powerful government team consisting of Gordon Brown and Ruth Kelly from the treasury, trade and industry secretary Patricia Hewitt and Baroness Hollis from the work and pensions department.

The atmosphere was tense as ministers expressed displeasure at the slow progress in educating trustees and the lamentable record of the funds they manage. Ms Farnish explained afterwards: "Trustees have a heavy responsibility as every penny counts in the pension fund and we spent a lot of time talking about how we can improve skills to strengthen this area."

Perhaps the top government regulator, the financial services authority (FSA), should have been summoned too. A week earlier it had published its own plans for what it euphemistically calls "qualified investor schemes". The new plans allowed pension funds to invest (gamble) in risky financial "derivatives" such as "short selling" (selling stocks you don't actually own) and hedge funds. These derivatives can have "much higher levels of gearing than for retail authorised funds" and can make enormous profits very quickly. By the same token they can make enormous losses very quickly too. Indeed, the funds are so risky they are only available to "institutional and expert investors" – ie the very people who got such a bollocking from treasury ministers for being so third rate.

PS: *Eye* 1100 predicted that the March meeting of the FSA would "approve new rules that will allow pension funds to invest in hedge funds". And lo it came to pass that on 29 March, *FTFM*, the *FT* supplement on fund management, led with the story that BT's pension fund, one of Europe's largest, has decided to gamble £500m of its pensioners' money in hedge funds. *FTFM* the following week (5 April) reported a stampede into hedge funds from British Rail, Nestlé and other big pension funds.

How to break wind

Daily Telegraph

IT'S boom time for EDF, aka Electricité de France, the nationalised, French-government monopoly which has done so well out of electricity privatisation in the UK.

Though privatisation in Britain was designed to end the state-controlled monopoly of the old Central Electricity Generating Board, as EDF proudly announced when its half-yearly accounts were published last month, it now distributes electricity and gas to more than a quarter of the UK's population, controls 10 percent of the British electricity market, has more than five million customers here and is a major generating power.

Its UK profits have jumped 69 percent to £640m; it has swallowed up what were London Electricity, Seeboard and SWEB (South-Western); and it is planning to raise electricity prices by 6.9 percent and gas by 4.5 percent.

In response to pressure from Brussels, it is itself being prepared for privatisation, it says. But it has been saying this for years. While Italy and Spain have passed laws to restrict EDF's expansion, it is free to operate in Britain pretty much as it likes.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

WITH just weeks to go before the euro elections, bitter divisions among Tory MEPs threaten to wreck the party's election campaign in the UK.

First, party leader Michael Howard decided earlier this year that his MEPs should renew a pact with one of the most federalist political groups in the European parliament, the European People's Party (EPP-ED). This angered his Eurosceptic MEPs and left the 36-strong group badly split.

Matters have been made far worse, however, following an email on 1 April to the Tory MEPs from their group leader, Jonathan Evans. He demanded, with no hint of an April fool, that they all remove their names from a parliamentary motion calling for a no-confidence vote against the European commission for its dire handling of the Eurostat fraud affair (see Eyes passim).

This did not go down well at all, not least because many Tories have been intimately involved trying to prosecute this case and the loss of their signatures from the motion would cause it to fall. Why the order to let the commission off the hook? It seems Evans was only obeying orders. At a heated meeting with the leader of the federalist EPP/ED group, Hans-Gert Poettering, he was told in no uncertain terms his MEPs could not support the motion.

In the event 13 Tories have held firm and gone against Evans' edict. The result is that what was previously an uneasy truce between pro-European and Eurosceptic Tories is now open warfare. As a source close to the dissidents said: "One day after joining the EPP, we are ordered to stop criticising the European Commission – this is just what we feared!"

Down on the Fish Farm

FEW understand better that charity begins at home than Shetland Island Council (SIC) and its salmon-farming chums.

Four fish farm companies have gone bust there recently, the latest being SSG Seafoods Limited – down the tubes to the tune of £13.5m. Nearly £6m of this is public money owed to Shetland Development Trust, which was set up by SIC to promote business development in the islands.

When SSG Shetland Seafoods Ltd crashed in January, three of its seven directors had close links to the council and the trust: Alistair Goodlad, a former SIC councillor; Leslie Angus, a serving SIC councillor and chairman of Shetland Development Trust; and Wendy Goodie, an employee of Shetland Development Trust. Alistair Goodlad was also joint owner of Bressay Salmon which also went bust in January.

Morgan Goodlad, SIC chief executive officer and brother of Alistair, commenting to the local newspaper on a request for a public inquiry, said: "It is not going to tell us any more than we know. But if it's a matter of being seen to be done then quite honestly we'll do it." No such inquiry has been announced. However, a private individual has lodged a formal complaint with the audit commission asking for an investigation into the probity of the use of public money in Shetland.

But it's hard to keep a good lad down. Shortly after receiver Ernst & Young arrived in January to wind up SSG Shetland Seafoods' affairs, a new salmon-farming company, Foraness Fish Limited (FFL) was formed with Alistair Goodlad as a director. FFL bought 300,000 salmon from the receivers at an undisclosed price, while a further 500,000 have been sold to other Shetland fish farmers – proving yet again that charity really does begin at home and that there's no such thing as an "ill wind" for Shetland salmon farmers.

'Old Trout'

FTVE

Easter Programmes (All Channels)

PITY any churchy tourists who happen to have been in the UK this Easter. Flicking through the channels, they find that Britain's main television channel is about to show, at peak-time on Easter Sunday, a programme called *Messiah 2*.

Imagining it to be the second part of a transmission of Handel's Oratorio or perhaps the second episode of the life of Christ, they switch on to encounter a gruesome police drama about the hunt for a serial killer. Bishops and vicars will doubtless write to the BBC to complain that it was insensitive to accidentally run on Christianity's holiest day a programme with such a title. But the worse possibility arises that it wasn't an accident at all: perhaps someone thought the title sounded quite neat for Easter.

Even more so than Christmas, which has established a strong enough separate identity as a toy festival and winter holiday, Easter is embarrassing for television executives. For all the fuss about Easter bunnies and chocolate eggs, there's still a residual sense, helped by Mel Gibson, of how this weekend came to have its bank holidays.

But Christianity has more noise than numbers: religious shows just don't rate. Accordingly, they've come to be seen as a penance in the schedule. During a Lenten press conference, ITV controller Nigel Pickard revealed that he plans to petition the regulator Ofcom to reduce his channel's current obligation to 104 hours of God-slots.

This reluctance has led the schedulers to develop tricks. The first of these is to stretch the dates. Easter is notoriously a moveable feast but has become even more flexible in television. So *Jesus Who?*, a pretty old-fashioned religious show in which Rick Wakeman explained his religious faith, was screened at 11.05 at night on the Tuesday before Good Friday. Even more bizarrely, Channel 4's *Resurrection*, a commendably serious piece featuring the Bishop of Durham, is not being screened on Easter Sunday, as would seem logical, but the following day. This is because the actual sacred days are now too good an opportunity to go for ratings with all those families captive in their homes, like a mini-Christmas. BBC1 leaves its usual Friday night peak-time schedule untouched, up to and including Jonathan Ross in a programme which the website suitably describes as "irreverent".

MODERN SOLUTIONS
Marital Difficulty

Another popular way round the Easter obligations is to take the view that all suffering is, in some way, you know, spiritual. So, on Easter Sunday, ITV1 has *Out Of The Shadows – John McCarthy Returns To Lebanon*. This is a good idea for a programme and McCarthy is a brave and decent man; but you sense he would feel embarrassed at being presented as a Christ-like figure to satisfy Ofcom requirements. In fact, one of the interesting things about him is that he was probably the least religious of the British and Irish hostages. One of the others was a devout Anglican and archbishop's envoy – but perhaps Terry Waite is a bit too religious for the schedules these days.

Taking the same view that all pain is, in a way, crucifixion, BBC2 devotes Good Friday afternoon to two programmes about Colditz. Well, the camp had a chaplain. BBC1 also has *A Letter To Lilli*, a documentary, produced by the faith department (as religion is now called), about a Holocaust victim. It's an excellent historical documentary; but if films about the Holocaust are going to be accepted as religious output, then ITV will soon be fobbing off Ofcom with docs about Hitler as part of its 104 hours.

The argument against serious Easter programming is obvious: the church-going population is very small. But regulators should either allow completely secular schedules or insist that the religious programmes shown are seriously about belief. The current view that any programme which is solemn or arty or has music or suffering in it is somehow religious is failing to serve either the religious audience or the secular one.

Oh, and Five's big Good Friday treat is a screening of Coppola's *The Godfather*. Well, the characters are all Catholics, after all.

'Remote Controller'

B B C O . B . N .

"FOR those of us standing close to Michael Grade last Friday as we welcomed him back to the BBC as the new Chairman, it was tangible just how much the BBC means to him and just how much he believes in it as the creative powerhouse of Britain. It was an emotional event not only for Michael but also for the many staff who were able to be there at the Media Centre to watch his impressive press conference in which his own pride, passion, delight, commitment and warmth shone through.

"It is a fantastic appointment. Michael is one of the major world figures in broadcasting and the wider creative industry, with an outstanding record of achievement. He has a deep understanding of broadcasting and firmly believes in the BBC and its place at the heart of national life. He is passionate about creativity, talent and ambition in programmes. I know he will enjoy the full support of everyone in the organisation...

"...He spoke brilliantly on why the licence fee is a strength not a weakness in defining the BBC. It's clear we have an outstanding, charismatic and confident Chairman to take us on the journey to Charter Renewal. Michael arrives on 17th May."

— Memo to staff from Mark Byford, acting director-general of the BBC.

DUMB BRITAIN

Easter Geography Special!

Beat The Nation, C4

Graeme Garden: Brazil is a major country in which continent?
Contestant: Europe.
GG: What is the highest mountain in England?
Contestant (*after long pause*): Everest.

Steve Wright's Big Quiz, Radio 2

Steve Wright: What kind of lettuce takes its name from a Greek island?
Contestant: Iceland.
SW: What is the capital of Switzerland? Be careful with this one.
Contestant: Munich.

Star 107 FM, Cambridgeshire

Presenter: In which country would you find Miami?
Contestant: Uh... pass.
Presenter: In which city would you find the Eiffel Tower?
Same contestant: London.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: What is the official language of Israel?
Contestant: Latin.

AD NAUSEAM

DRIVERS in Redcar and Cleveland are being warned about the dangers of speeding in a radio campaign voiced by the actor Neil Morrissey. The ad highlights the burden placed on the NHS by selfish, errant drivers; and it implores them to "Wake Up to the Real Cost of Speeding".

One person who knows all about the real cost of speeding is Neil Morrissey. He was flashed by a speed camera on the M4 last October doing 67mph in a 50 limit. Morrissey neglected to pay the automatic £60 postal fine and then twice failed to turn up in court when his case was called.

He was fined £150, ordered to pay £40 costs and got three points on his licence. So the real cost of speeding is, er, £190.

POSTER OF THE WEEK *Billboard, Beckenham*

YOU'VE got to love the symmetry: in January, Ben Langdon, Mark Wnek and Orlando Hooper-Greenhill set-up an exciting new agency, Mark Ben Orlando (*Eyes passim*), Wnek having left the UK chairmanship of the Euro RSCG agency to launch the new shop.

Just 116 days later, Langdon walks out on Mark Ben Orlando leaving Wnek feeling "utterly betrayed". "When I was considering doing a start-up Ben came to me unemployed. I believed in him and gave him a shot and now I don't know what to believe."

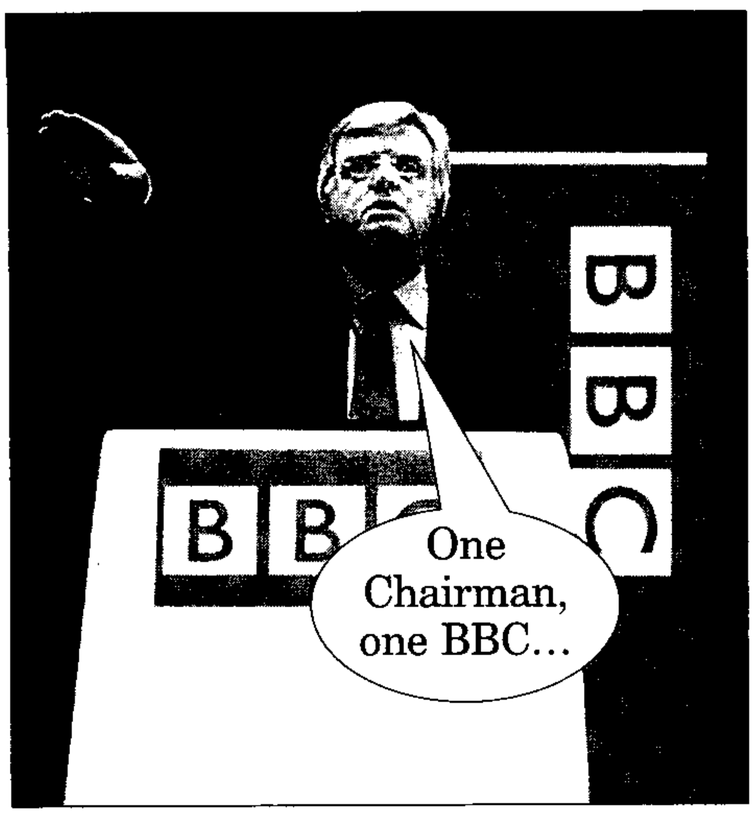
As Wnek is held in such high regard, adland was awash with sympathy – especially when it learnt of Langdon's new job as UK chairman of the Euro RSCG agency!

COMPUTER crime is on the increase – and not just over the internet. The online directory inquiries service 192.com has recently become a magnet for criminals at its London offices, which several different groups of burglars targeted no fewer than four times in the last two weeks of March.

Two of the attempted break-ins failed (one even resulted in arrests) but two were successful, with a laptop being stolen on the first occasion and a rather more expensive 42" gas plasma exhibition screen going walkabout the second time.

This meant that 192.com staff had to hire another big screen for their stall at the Computer & Internet Crime Show at the Novotel Hotel in London on 30 March. Alas, despite the setting and even though their stall was bang opposite that of the Metropolitan police, somehow another criminal managed to walk off with the replacement plasma screen too. The Met was in a perfect position to confirm that there were, er, no witnesses.

MEDIA NEWS



PERHAPS one of Michael Grade's first acts as chairman of the BBC could be to look into the conduct of one of his rivals for the post, Sir David Frost.

A Birtist to the core – the pair worked together at LWT in the 70s and 80s, and Birt later brought Frostie's pisspoor Sunday morning show over to the Beeb at great expense – Sir David was interviewed for the chairmanship but to no avail.

Perhaps those on the selection panel had been put off after seeing his fawning interview with Lady Annabel Goldsmith on 14 March, during which he shamelessly talked up her recently published memoirs. (By happy coincidence, Frost was also the main speaker at her launch party – and the man who persuaded Harold Wilson to give Annabel's beloved Jimmy a knighthood.) How many other BBC presenters would be allowed to use their position to give such a blatant plug to one of their friends' books?

This is not the first time Frostie has used his programme to help his pals in the Goldsmith clan. In 1997 he gave a fawning interview to James Goldsmith, the unlamented crackpot leader of the the equally unlamented Referendum Party. No other fringe politician would have been afforded the airtime and *arslikhan* which Frost granted Sir James that morning. But then, unlike other fringe politicians, Sir Jams had had the foresight to invite Frostie for a holiday at his Xanadu-like hacienda in Mexico beforehand.

MYSTIC MOG AWARD OF THE WEEK

THE *Guardian*'s Matt Wells, sent to stake out the job interviews for BBC Chairman at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on March 24, was on the spot with his expert opinion when Michael Grade finished his grilling. This is what Wells wrote:

"We were there when he [Grade] emerged to ask how the interview had gone. 'I've no idea. I'm sure they'll let me know,' he said confidently.

Don't bank on it, Mr Grade."

JUST FANCY THAT!

"TV meals are 'eroding manners'."
— News story in the *Times*, 31 March.

"This one-pot wonder makes an ideal TV dinner, says Jill Dupleix."
— Recipe in the *Times*, 31 March.

THE BBC seems to be taking its sensitivity over language to extremes in its coverage of issues of national security.

Editors at BBC Radio Devon made abrupt changes to a report on 30 March about a police and MI5 counter-terrorism operation on that day. After receiving a complaint from a listener regarding the 12pm bulletin, the term "suspected Islamic terrorists" was changed to "British men", and the description of the raids as the biggest counter-terrorism operation "since 11 September" was changed to the biggest for "many years".

The BBC explained that after the complaint it realised it did not know what faith the "suspected terrorists" were and so felt it was better to call them British citizens. This was despite the fact that the BBC report was presumably based on a Met police press release of 11.15am which referred several times to the Muslim community. As for why the reference to 11 September was dropped, there was "no particular reason".

"It's outrageous how long you have to wait to see the Doctor"

OH, YEAH? BT chief executive Ben Verwaayen boasted recently to the Sunday Express that what he most likes about his job is "being contacted by customers directly".

It's hard to imagine how any customer can ever have a one-to-one with Verwaayen as all attempts to talk to him through BT head office lead to callers being fobbed off with assistants. Letters from customers addressed to the CEO don't appear to get the Verwaayen personal touch either, the standard replies being written and signed by his PA.

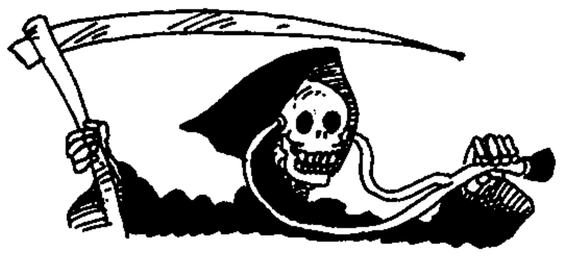
How he gets such satisfaction from being "contacted by customers directly" therefore remains a mystery… unless of course punters buttonhole him in the BT car park.

VIEWING GUIDE
THE PERFECT HOLIDAY
BBC One, *7pm*:
Not N. Ireland
The Times

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

THE LAUNCH OF THE VIVIENNE WESTWOOD RETROSPECTIVE AT THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM:
VIVIENNE, HOW WONDERFUL TO BE AMONGST SUCH ANCIENT MUSEUM PIECES!
YES...
I FEEL SO AT HOME!



DOING THE ROUNDS

Wails from Wales

ONE side-effect of devolution has been the big difference in access to the NHS across borders.

While the NHS in England is throwing all its money at reducing waiting lists to six months or less in time for the next election (at least for high-profile operations), those in Wales are only just being offered a "guaranteed wait" of no longer than 18 months. Such is the lack of capacity in Wales, that daytime bed occupancy at the Morriston hospital in Swansea has been known to hit 117 percent, with all hospitals in Wales averaging 98 percent.

The problems are familiar: closure of hospitals and wards, and 200 beds a day blocked due to a lack of care homes in local authorities. In addition, the Welsh assembly has been reluctant to set up the private diagnostic and treatment centres that are cutting lists but taking business away from the NHS in England.

However, English NHS hospitals are compensating by taking on the Welsh workload. As far back as October 2001, Wales was farming out heart surgery to the Hammersmith hospital in London and to Manchester Royal Infirmary and Liverpool's cardio-thoracic centre. Hospitals in Bath and Bristol are now being paid handsomely to cut down the Welsh hip waiting time.

NHS staff in Wales are singularly unimpressed with the performance of health minister Jane Hutt, who appears to have the close support of wannabe Labour leader Peter Hain. And cardiac surgeons at the Morriston in particular seem to be feeling the heat. This February the trust management finally identified a "total breakdown in relationships" in the cardiac theatres, requiring "a period of time out". All elective and waiting list initiative cases were cancelled and staff were sent home "to allow time and space to think and recharge batteries".

The service was suspended with all leave paid for. As chief executive Jane Perrin put it: "The cardiac team has been working under considerable pressure, with additional weekday hours and weekend work. In order to allow staff to recover from these pressures, we agreed to limit activity to emergencies only."

But this tells only part of the story. The cardiac theatre and intensive care unit is currently subject to an internal inquiry into bullying and harassment among staff. Concerns about the behaviour of two of the surgeons who were alleged to have shouted and threatened staff were officially raised in November 2003.

To date three consultant anaesthetists have left the Morriston cardiac unit and future recruitment looks bleak. In Cardiff, 17 anaesthetists applied for a single cardiac anaesthetic job; but at the Morriston a single applicant withdrew his application after learning that the problems hadn't been resolved. As one staff member said: "The misery these men have inflicted is so great. In South Wales, there are not many jobs and the lesser-paid staff are so used to the culture of bullying, they put up with it. Many have families and mortgages, and there have been many threats of repercussions should anyone speak out."

Meanwhile in Bath, patients waiting more than six months for orthopaedic surgery have been sent to France. Unfortunately French hips and knees seem different from British ones, so a large number of these patients have returned requiring revision surgery for ill-fitting artificial joints. Some surgeons in Bath, faced with a punitive new full-time contract which makes private practice virtually impossible, have opted to become part-time NHS surgeons instead in order to accommodate the vast number of private hip and knee replacements that are being ferried in from Wales. So Bath patients can't have Bath surgeons because they're redoing the French and starting on the Welsh.

Many surgeons, however, dislike the idea of milking the waiting list initiative. As one eye surgeon commented: "What worries me most is the collapse of the doctor/patient relationship, with the fragmentation and part-privatisation of services such as cataract surgery. I would be paid as much for working one busy weekend for our local private contractor as I am for the whole month of NHS work. How can this be sensible or wise use of public funds?"

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

A&E
THIS QUEUE'S RIDICULOUS
WELL, THE GOOD NEWS IS YOU SHOULD BE INDOORS WITHIN THE HOUR
UUm.
WHAT'S THE BAD NEWS?
THE NHS WON'T PAY FOR THE CLAMP
AFL CLAMPED

SIGNAL FAILURES

STAGECOACH's bid for the Kent commuter trains formerly run by Connex was so dire it didn't make the shortlist for the new franchise. So passengers can rest assured their service won't now sink to the level of Stagecoach's South West Trains. Or can they?

After Stagecoach was excluded, Richard Bowker, chairman *and* chief executive of the "strategic" rail authority (SRA), discussed the matter over dinner with Stagecoach executive director Graham Eccles. According to a letter by Eccles leaked to the *Sunday Times*, Bowker suggested to Eccles the terms under which the SRA would allow Stagecoach to cut a deal with Danish state railways (a contender for the franchise).

In this context, Bowker is a government buyer. Presumably government procurement rules, resting on the principles of impartiality and independence, apply to him. The SRA doesn't think it's unfair on the other franchise bidders that Bowker's advice could strengthen one contestant's hand and potentially influence the outcome of the bidding process. It says this kind of advice is to get the "best bidders" – an interesting adjective to apply to Stagecoach after its pisspoor performance at SWT and its failure to make the Kent shortlist.

The Kent operation was effectively renationalised last autumn when Connex was booted out and replaced by a temporary state-owned company. SRA figures show that punctuality immediately improved by 9 percent. Oddly, this was one piece of good news the SRA and "new" Labour didn't crow about, however. They want the service removed from UK state control as fast as possible, regardless of what that means for passengers.

Thus it remains possible that the state railway of *another* country, Denmark, could take over the Kent operation. Last year the Dutch state railway was given a long franchise, with PFI specialist Serco, to run Merseyside's trains. And French state rail (also in the running for the Kent franchise) and FirstGroup recently took over the trans-Pennine service. "New" Labour clearly isn't dogmatic about private or public ownership: it simply doesn't want the companies entrusted with UK train services to be accountable in any way to UK voters or taxpayers.

WHILE Railtrack and its maintenance contractors caused mayhem on the British mainland, Northern Ireland Railways (NIR) remained mercifully free of privatisation disasters.

Alas, since the failings of Railtrack's system were exposed, "new" Labour has forced NIR down the same track – with predictably fatal results.

One of the first projects put out to private tender was the upgrade of the Belfast-to-Bangor commuter line, a contract won by a subsidiary of construction giant Mowlem plc. Last month a judge in Belfast crown court criticised Mowlem Railways for safety errors which led to the death of rail worker Terence Lowry, a 39-year-old father of two from Doncaster.

The company was fined £75,000 following a health and safety investigation which revealed how Mr Lowry was killed in February 2002 when the railway maintenance vehicle he was travelling in struck another vehicle parked without warning lights on the Bangor line.

Mowlem Railways admitted three breaches of health and safety law and the fine was a record in Northern Ireland for cases of this kind.

Last year Mowlem made pre-tax profits of £45.2m.

'Dr B. Ching'

THE COMMUTERS
ZZZZ
OH GOD! I'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR AGES... I'VE MISSED MY STOP!
NO YOU HAVEN'T. WE'VE BEEN STUCK IN A TUNNEL FOR 50 MINUTES
Grizelda

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

THE POTTYBOROUGH EFFECT

A FASCINATING act of political suicide is unfolding in Peterborough, where the ruling Conservative group seems to be doing all it can to ensure it loses control of the city council at the June election.

It started last summer when the council's then leader, Neville Sanders, made national headlines with a terrific display of ignorance and oafishness. He told a newspaper that he was "fed up with paying taxes to cover for the lazy bastards in Ireland" and that Northern Ireland could "f**k off and run its own affairs". The council had been asked, in a letter sent to all local authorities by Carrickfergus council in Ulster, to support a campaign for an independent inquiry into the suicide of Private Paul Cochrane, 18, at a Royal Irish Regiment barracks in Co Antrim. Before shooting himself Cochrane claimed he had been bullied.

Sanders, 72, wrote back to Carrickfergus: "Members of the Armed Forces do get killed, be it by accident or design. That is what they are paid for." The effing and blinding poured out when the *Belfast Telegraph* rang Sanders to ask if he had meant what he said. Sanders said he did not know or care where "poxy Carrickfergus" was – presumably assuming it was a nest of traitorous Fenians, when it is in fact a staunchly Unionist community.

This was too much even for the Conservatives. Tory HQ expelled Sanders from the party, and he was removed as council leader after six of his own councillors disowned him. But other local Tories then lined up behind their fallen leader and, in an extraordinary act of spite, deselected the six "rebel" Tories who had spoken out against Sanders. The Peterborough Conservative Association at the time happened to be chaired by one David Sanders, son of Neville.

The six, who include a former leader of Cambridgeshire county council and the current and two former mayors of Peterborough, plus nine others, will be standing as independents in June against sitting Conservatives. Should they be elected – and they have every chance – it would leave the council hung and the Tories well and truly stuffed. No wonder locals call it Pottyborough.

● **PERSECUTED publican Geoff Monks has won another small but significant victory in his fight for justice. *Eye* 1099 reported how the Standards Board for England (SBE) had concluded after a six-month investigation that David Scott, a Tory councillor on East Northamptonshire district council (ENDC), had done nothing improper when he offered to buy Monks's three pubs at knockdown prices. Business had nosedived as the result of a series of vindictive food safety prosecutions against Monks by ENDC. But an SBE "ethical standards officer" cleared Scott, saying there was no evidence that he had "used his office to obtain an advantage for himself". Monks's lawyers, however, threatened to force a judicial review, pointing out that the SBE appeared to have ignored that part of the local government code of conduct which says councillors must not act in a way "likely to bring the office of councillor into disrepute". Last week the board withdrew its report and said it would reconsider the matter. After all, it had only had six months to examine the evidence the first time!**

GRIM AND BEAR IT

SO FAREWELL, then, to the career of former Lincolnshire county council leader Jim Speechley (*Eyes passim*) as he begins an 18-month prison sentence after being found guilty of "misconduct in public office". A jury at Sheffield crown court found that the Tory had tried to influence the route of a planned bypass in the hope of making a killing when the value of a piece of land he owned soared.

The court heard how in March 2000 "Grim" Jim, 67, had called project manager Richard Greener into his office to make changes to the original line of the £24m scheme for the A1073 to bypass the village of Crowland. The council leader took a red pen and drew in a route that left a four-acre field he owned enclosed within a new "development belt". If in the future the land were to be allocated for industry or housing, its value might increase from around £17,500 to £375,000. Yet Speechley failed to declare any interest when the scheme was discussed in council over the next 12 months.

The prosecution said that, as a councillor for 39 years, Speechley would have known that agricultural land enclosed by a new bypass had the prospect of leaping in value. Prosecuting counsel Martin Wilson QC asked: "Do you say the thought never occurred to you at all, that your land may become more valuable if the bypass took [that] route?" Speechley kept a straight face as he replied: "It never occurred to me at all."

Speechley won the *Eye*'s Brass-Necked Councillor of the Year award in 2002 for his refusal to resign as leader for nearly a year after external auditors condemned him for creating "a climate of fear" among council staff and spending large amounts of taxpayers' money on illegal payoffs. Although his conviction automatically disbars him from being a councillor, the disqualification will not kick in until his appeal is settled. So Jim is still hanging on from his prison cell. Grimly.

SHAD NEWS

WHEN residents of Shad Thames, a posh bit of London's former Docklands hard by Tower Bridge, complained about the noise made by binmen coming round early in the morning, Southwark council was quick to act.

Refuse collection crews were instructed to stop collecting rubbish at Shad Thames "prior to 08:00 AM Monday to Sunday". One crew was told that the instruction was issued because "there are influential people with plenty of clout living around Shad Thames". Still, at least the binmen won't be sitting twiddling their thumbs before 8 o'clock. Instead they have been told to go and disturb the sleep of those who live on the far less salubrious Neckinger council estate.

Local Unison branch secretary John Mulrenan wrote to Phil Davies, head of waste management, to point out that the estate is home to many Unison members. "It's possible that tenants on the Neckinger, whose early morning peace will now be disturbed, will gain some comfort from the knowledge that the residents in Shad Thames can have a lie-in," he wrote. "But unlikely."

● **GREED before need continues to be the motto of county hall on the Isle of Wight. The council's head of education, David Pettitt, is being elevated to a newly-created job of director of children's services at a handsome £85,000 a year. The post was not advertised externally and Pettitt was the only internal candidate shortlisted and "interviewed" on 1 April [*sic*]. Pettitt's education department was said in its latest Ofsted report to "not serve vulnerable groups of children well". Meanwhile, social services portfolio holder Cllr Gordon Kendall and director Glen Garrod have decided under delegated powers to raise the price of meals on wheels to the elderly by 40 percent on the grounds that they cannot afford to continue dishing out cheap grub to crumblies. Well, the dosh for Pettitt's new job had to come from somewhere, didn't it?**

Number crunching

£800,000

■ Average sum given by central government to local councils for road surface repairs in the last year

■ Average amount paid out by local councils in compensation for accidents caused by damaged road surfaces in the last year

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

"THERE is a growing awareness of exercise for long-term health and wellbeing, particularly for young people," says David Pennison, the property director of David Lloyd Leisure which is hoping to plonk a massive £10m private fitness club on a school playing field in Norwich.

Norfolk county council is to sell nine acres of fields belonging to Hewett School to raise funds for a new sports hall. The leisure centre will contain indoor and outdoor tennis courts, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, badminton courts, squash courts, all-weather pitches, a fitness suite, dance studios, a bar and restaurant.

The school is delighted to have negotiated a limited number of hours of free access to the all-weather pitch and tennis courts. And sixth formers will be offered a handful of free hours in the fitness equipment room, though to use any other facilities they will have to pay membership fees.

Also exciting the school are the "work experience opportunities" available to students with David Lloyd Leisure – in other words, the school will be providing free, unpaid labour to the centre as well.

Churlishly, not everyone is so pleased. Norwich city councillors, who have to decide whether or not to grant planning permission, are not yet convinced by the glossy brochures promising "world class tennis and health facilities for Norwich". Several question the benefit of the scheme to the community at large and other local schools which will not be able to afford to use the centre.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! JEZ HAS BEEN ARRESTED FOR "LOITERING WITH INTENT" IN A PUBLIC LAVATORY!
WHAT WAS HE THINKING OF?
THE CRAZY FOOL!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OF THE WEALTH OF EXQUISITE VICTORIAN TILING IN THESE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES? SOME OF THE GLAZING IS SIMPLY BREATHTAKING!

NOOKS and CORNERS

WHO advises the Department of Culture, Media 'n' Sport about architecture? English Heritage of course – except when its advice is inconvenient and it's ignored.

Consider Wembley, first put on the map by the British Empire Exhibition of 1924. The exhibition's principal legacy was the large but now demolished football stadium which is being replaced by the architect Norman Foster. All the exhibition structures were solid and permanent and some survive today: namely the Palace of Arts and the Palace of Industry.

The buildings were designed by the architects Sir John Simpson and Maxwell Ayrton in a monumental Imperial Neo-Classical manner, characteristic of the time. What made them so remarkable, however, was their reinforced concrete construction for which the engineer Owen Williams won a knighthood at the age of 34.

Williams went on to do great things on his own, such as the *Daily Express* building in Fleet Street, the Empire Pool at Wembley and the Boots Factory at Nottingham. The palaces of arts and industry are therefore not only important physical relics of a significant event in modern British history, but powerful, novel designs in concrete in their own right, constructed by a great 20th century British engineer.

Both were listed at grade II — but not any more as they have been quietly de-listed by the DCMS. English Heritage advised that the Palace of Arts had indeed been partly demolished but that the Palace of Industry — which now serves a useful purpose as, among other things, an oriental carpet warehouse — was intact and still deserved its listed status. But the DCMS has de-listed it anyway, so ensuring its disappearance. Surely not to help facilitate Foster's exciting vision for a new Wembley?

THE Roundhouse at Brithdir Mawr in Pembrokeshire, built by Tony Wrench and Jane Faith in 1997-98, is rather different: an "ecohome", in fact, made of a wood frame, recycled windows and a straw-insulated turf roof which uses solar power. It has a compost toilet and cost some £3,000 to build.

Unlike the brick and concrete houses which will gobble energy and generate pollution and which John Prescott and the government want to cover both sides of the Thames estuary, the Roundhouse has virtually no impact on the landscape. Indeed, nobody even knew it was there until it was seen from the air by an official from the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. The problem is that, although it was built at the invitation of the landowner who was interested in setting up an environmentally sustainable community, the house is illegal and must be demolished this month.

After his quiet rural life was spotted, Mr Wrench applied for planning permission to have the house classified as an agricultural worker's cottage, which is essentially what it is. But the local authority's development control officer Catherine Milner has made it her mission to have the Roundhouse destroyed.

The advice of the county council's estates department, to give a temporary permission for three years, was not reported to the planning committee, which itself was strongly discouraged from visiting the site. After an appeal, the case was to be assessed by the Welsh planning inspectorate as it was "a novel planning issue". But Ms Milner persuaded them it was merely a case of someone trying to put up a cheap house in the countryside illegally and an inspector decided the Roundhouse was "visually intrusive" and causes "demonstrable harm" — though what harm has never been demonstrated (for the full story, see www.brithdirmawr.com).

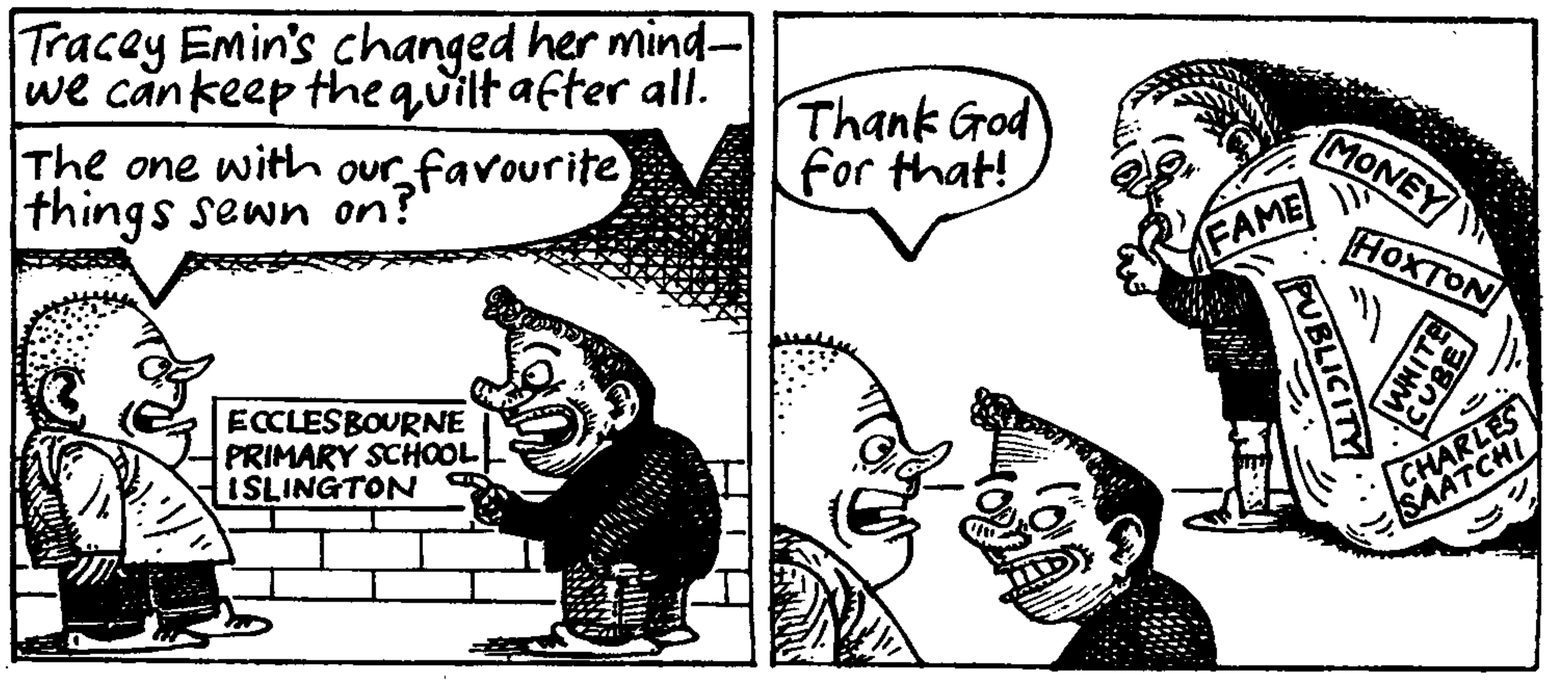
This is not just a case of some ageing hippies quarrelling with the system; nor of a nasty oversized bungalow being built without planning permission. In the context of global warming and the threat to cover much of the English countryside with energy-inefficient new houses, the Brithdir Mawr experiment may offer useful lessons. The case says much about the power and attitudes of many planning officers and other bureaucrats.

If it were proposed today, would Portmeirion, that famous, picturesque fantasy on the Merionethshire coast which used many recycled bits of old buildings, ever receive planning permission? I doubt it. Its creator, Clough Williams-Ellis, was also interested in building cheap cottages made of pisé de terre (mud) and fought passionately to prevent the countryside — both English and Welsh — from being ruined. I have no doubt the great Sir Clough would be on the side of Jane Faith and Tony Wrench and their admirable Roundhouse.

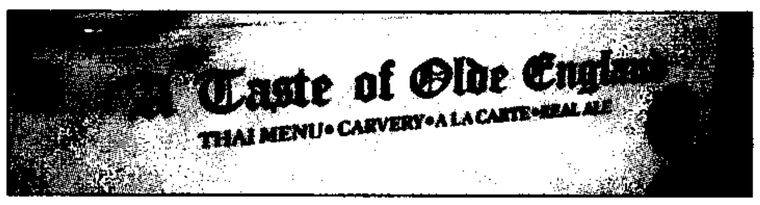
'Piloti'

VERY YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH



I-SPY



Delivery van, Totnes

Submitted by Andrew Denny and C.H. MacLeod. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

SPARE a thought this Easter for the staff of *BBC Music Magazine* who have committed the professional equivalent of mass suicide: every one of them, down to the last man, woman and critic, has resigned.

The reason? In a desperate manoeuvre BBC Worldwide has decided to offload the prestigious but loss-making title (along with Worldwide's specialist history and wildlife magazines too) to a Bristol-based publisher called Origin whose catalogue is blessed with such must-read journals as *The World of Cross-Stitching, Cross-Stitch Quick, Cross-Stitch Favourites, Cross-Stitch Card Shop* ("the perfect magazine for all your stitched greeting cards"), *Cross-Stitch Crazy* ("enjoy reading all the news and gossip from fellow stitchers") – and not forgetting *Cross-Stitch Gold* ("for the more discerning stitcher").

Where a group of serious music-writers fit in this embroidered paradise is unclear, which is why they've all decided to leave – from the humblest sub up to the acting editor, Harriet Smith, whose decision to show solidarity with her troops has thrown plans for the offloading into disarray.

It was meant to be rushed through in May but has been postponed until August to allow time to recruit an entire replacement staff. Whether Origin will find enough people of substance remains to be seen. As Smith has been telling anyone prepared to listen on the classical cocktail circuit, it's likely that Origin will slash production budgets and produce a music magazine more at one with its existing output – which, to be fair, isn't wholly focused on embroidery. There's also *Hair Ideas, Your Hair* and an authoritative monthly about ornamental ponds.

Moving the magazine to Bristol is a strange idea too given that the classical music world and everything attached to it (not least the CD companies whose products fill the pages of the magazine) is firmly based in London. As Smith says, Bristol doesn't even have a symphony orchestra; and the last time a music magazine relocated west (*Classic CD* went to Bath) it promptly collapsed.

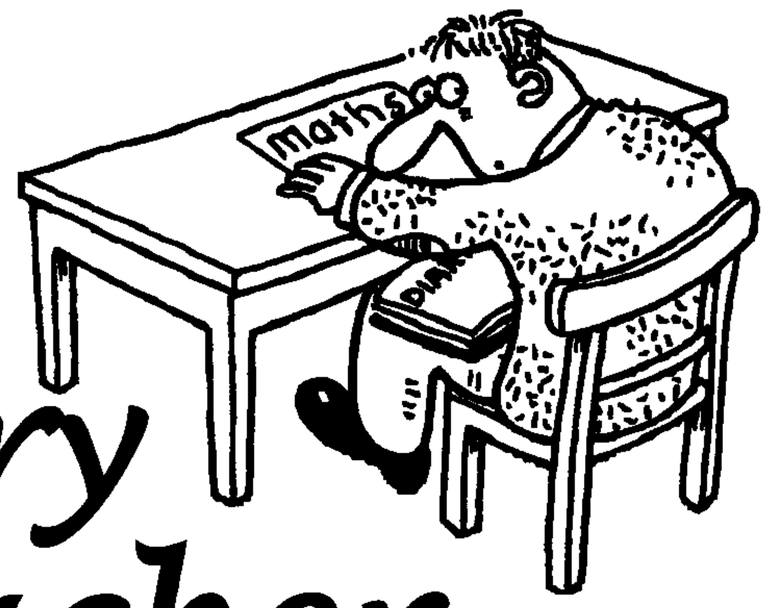
This, Smith fears, may be what BBC Worldwide expects. *BBC Music Magazine* is the biggest-selling title of its kind in the world. But classical music being what it is, it only sells 61,000 copies per issue, which doesn't cover the cost of production. Smith believes the Beeb would like to kill it off but daren't risk the attendant criticism while the future of the charter and the licence fee are at issue. Were the magazine to die under the hands of Origin, BBC Worldwide could keep a distance and say: ah well, we did our best.

Whether *BBC Music Magazine* survives or dies, there won't be any of its hitherto extremely loyal, long-serving staff around to see it.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

An Education Special

PRIVATE EYE



The Secret Diary of a School Teacher

I am a maths teacher in a 'bog standard' comprehensive school. In the autumn term of 2002 I kept a full diary of a week's lessons, and this is an edited version of it.

What follows is a description of each lesson: I have not embellished or exaggerated anything, or imported any apocryphal incidents. The only deviations from the facts are the names of the children and the descriptions of certain procedures that are particular to our school. I have changed these only to protect the privacy of the school and its pupils.

Also included are my own thoughts. They are not those of all teachers and I do not presume to speak for any of my colleagues. I consider myself to be a liberal thinker with left-of-centre political leanings. I do not think of myself as either a good or bad teacher. My inspector told me I was a "caring" teacher though in our profession we only quote Ofsted when they compliment us.

A. Teacher

Monday

Period 3

Year 8 (12-13 year olds), set 5/6

The lesson is about the properties of quadrilaterals. The students left our last lesson with a sketch of variously different shapes of quadrilateral, their names and an agreement that the internal angles added up to 360°. In this lesson I want them to use this knowledge to find missing angles: eg, add up the ones they have and take the total away from 360.

Ten minutes into the lesson, most of the class has arrived. Those who got here on time are now bored and talking: they have finished the five subtractions I put on the board as a warm-up exercise. The pupils all came from the same place and left at the same time.

Only about half of them have either a pen or a pencil; only a very few of the girls have both. We do have a school shop where pens and pencils can be bought for 5p each. One girl, let's call her Susan White, never has a pen. She starts to explain at length how it is not her fault.

Me: "Never mind the story, what have you been using all day?"

Susan: "I borrowed one, sir."

Me: "Why didn't you get one at break?"

Susan: "I didn't need a pen at break, sir."

Fifteen minutes into the lesson the classroom door opens and Brian Moor falls in, singing to the tune of "This Old Man":

I love drugs, drugs love me
Crack cocaine and ecstasy
With a sniff sniff here and a sniff sniff there
Now I'm in intensive care

The whole class starts to laugh. Without speaking to him I direct him to his seat. I then challenge a few who are laughing but who I know can be easily quietened. I praise the few who stay quiet. They all become quiet again. Tracy Jones is writing on the desk. When I tell her to stop, she shouts out in an exasperated tone: "For Christ's sake leave me alone, pick on somebody else for a change."

I try to start again. I have given up on the warm-up exercise. I sketch a square on the board and mark in a right angle. I ask: "Hands up who knows the size of this angle and what it is called." Five or six children put up their hands. Mark Anderson shouts out: "A square angle." Before I can speak, Billy Willis says: "Wrong, you stupid queer boy." They all start to laugh again. Mark snatches Billy's book and screws up the front cover.

I move Mark forward two desks and tell both him and Billy off. Mark is wearing two full sovereign rings. These are banned in school; he is about to argue with me about being moved so I tell him to remove the rings. Three boys shout at him: "Ah, sir got you, he got you."

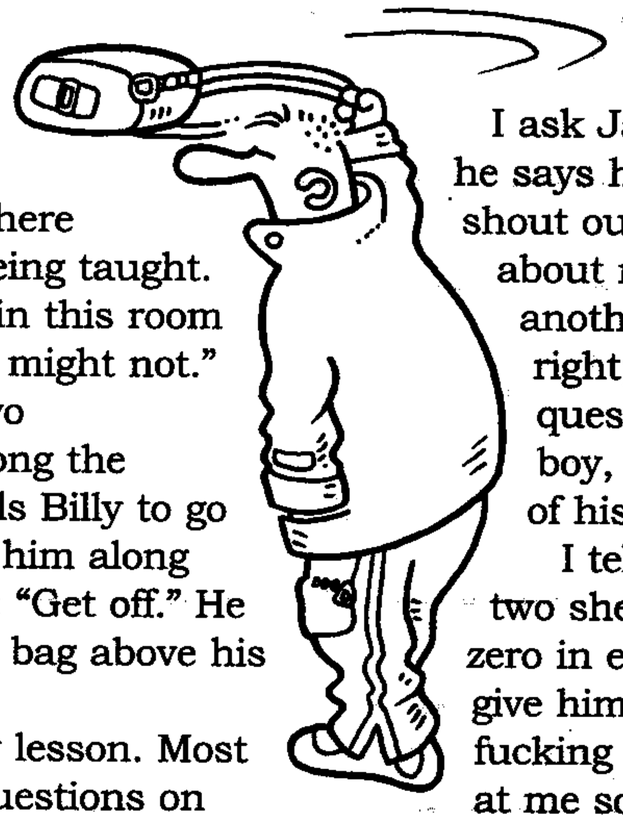
We are now 20 minutes into the lesson. Brian Moor then starts the rhyme again. I tell him to be quiet. At this point I give up on trying to teach the planned lesson and quickly write five quite long adding-up questions on the board and tell them all to turn to the back of their books and start them. Susan White shouts out that she needs a pen, Brian Moor that he needs his book.

Three more discover that they haven't got pens. I am giving out some pencils when Sam Foster comes in. He shouts that he has been with the head and throws his late-note and daily report book at my desk from across the room.

Billy shouts across the room, asking Sam what has happened to him. Sam says that the "old bitch" (the head) had told him he would be suspended. He is shouting this. I stand in front of him and direct him to his seat. He looks around me and continues his conversation; I tell him to sit down and he ignores me and starts telling another boy the same story. He walks around me and tries to sit next to Billy. I tell

him to sit in his place. He says: "No."

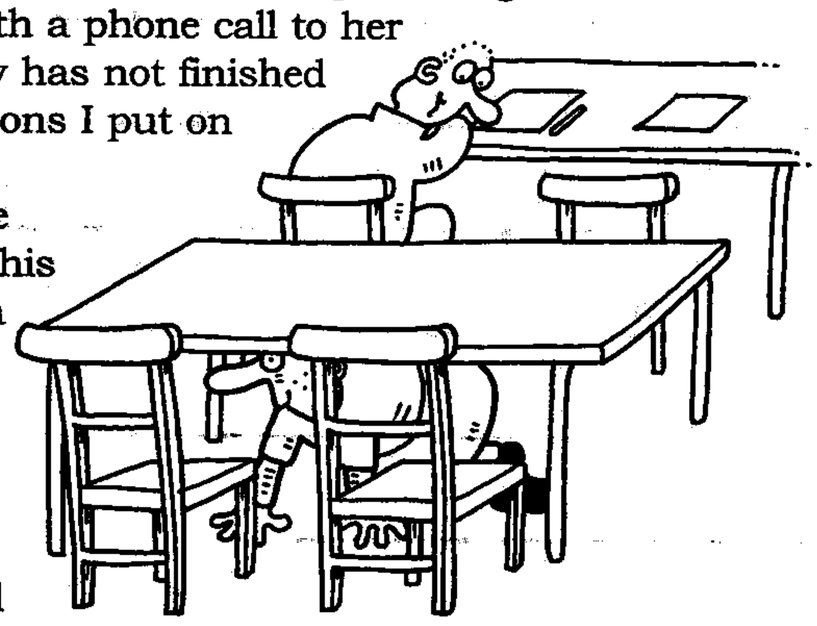
I tell him again to sit in his seat or he will have to leave. He says that he will go then, and walks out, crossing the corridor into another classroom, where another class from his year group is being taught. He starts to talk to them. The teacher in this room tells him to go. Billy says: "I might or I might not." He is now playing to an audience in two classrooms. A senior teacher comes along the corridor and sees the situation; she tells Billy to go to her office. She reaches out to usher him along and he jumps away from her shouting: "Get off." He then walks in front of her swinging his bag above his head like a helicopter rotor.



It is now almost 30 minutes into my lesson. Most of the children have finished the five questions on the board. I give out some year seven textbooks for them to do a basic adding exercise.

Brian Moor is entertaining the class by hiding beneath a desk surrounded by chairs shouting: "I'm not here, I'm not here." I move the desk and tell him to get up. He complains that I've hurt him and he is going to phone Claims Direct.

By the end of the lesson, despite being moved and threatened with a phone call to her parents, Tracy has not finished the five questions I put on the board.



Even by the standards of this class, this is a particularly bad lesson. It is only the second time I have given up on my original lesson plan with them.

Tracy has had two or three homes and two step-fathers in three years; Brian and Susan, like many, are on medication to modify their behaviour. Sam is not a real problem as he spends most of his time either in isolation or on temporary exclusion.

The most that will be expected of this group is a few grade E and F GCSEs from children I have not mentioned. I would expect about seven of the 18 to do any homework set. They will repeat the same work at a marginally higher level in years 9, 10 and 11. There are three girls who I think might be promoted to a higher group. This will make little difference to their eventual results but it is the best I can do for them. I estimate that we lose one third of all the lesson time available to poor behaviour.

Period 4

Year 9 (13-14 year olds), set 4/6

The lesson is about dividing and multiplying by 10, 100, 1,000 and so on. They have done place value in years 7 and 8 as well as learning tricks such as moving decimal points and the use of zero as a placeholder. The aim of the lesson is to consolidate the skill by completing table-style worksheets that give random numbers to divide and multiply by 10, 100 and 1,000.

The class arrives punctually; all but three are in within a few minutes of the start. Jacky Willis (Billy's sister) immediately begins shading in the squares on her worksheet. I take it from her and put another on her desk, while calling for the class to be quiet.

I ask James Brodie to divide 200 by 10 for me; he says he doesn't know how. Half-a-dozen shout out the correct answer. I talk briefly about moving the decimal point. I then ask another boy a similar question. He gets it right; we move on and have a successful question and answer session apart from one boy, who has made an aeroplane from one of his worksheets.

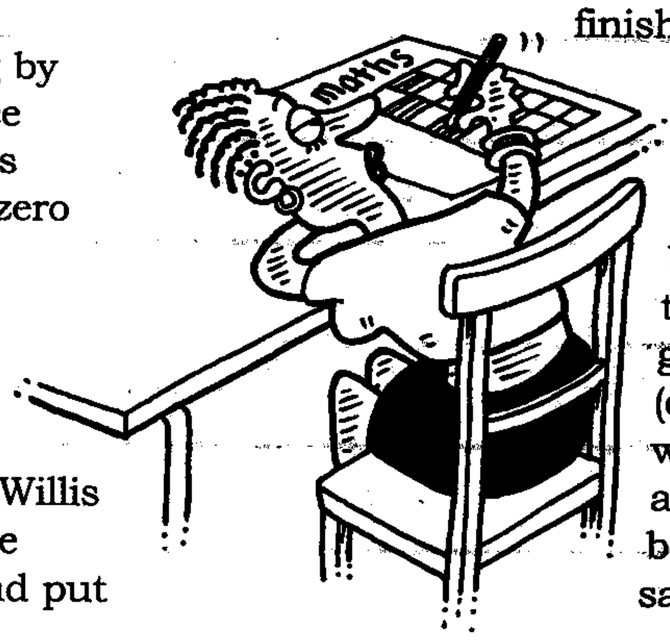
I tell them to get on with completing the two sheets. Gareth Burns immediately writes zero in every square and asks for more work. I give him another sheet; he says that he's "not fucking doing it again." The word is not aimed at me so I ignore it. He then starts the new sheet without any problem.

We are now about 15 minutes into the lesson. A boy called Anthony Gray arrives — he is late for every lesson, he never has a pen or pencil and does hardly any work at all. He tries to sit next to James Brodie. I direct him to his seat; he refuses and sits next to James. Quietly I tell him to move, most of the class are on task and I do not want to disturb them. Gemma Holmes shouts out to him to stay where he is because other people are allowed to sit with their friends. He moves and I give him a work sheet. The next time I turn around he has moved back next to James and they are both talking. I make him move back.

You cannot make deals with these kids. In a statement like "You can stay sitting there but you don't talk", they will only hear "You can stay there". They are not mature enough to realise that there is give and take or two sides to a bargain. So you are faced with an argument every time you move someone. There will be two minutes of pleading that they will stop talking; three minutes of offering not to talk if you let them stay where they are; a couple of minutes' moaning about how unfair you are; and then at least two minutes to move. A move within the room will require them to put their coat on, their books in their bag and then their chair under the desk: this is five minutes out of everybody else's time.

A seating plan is a battle at the start of every lesson. Once it's in place, you have to enforce it. Often it is a case of a choice of two friends being at different ends of the room and shouting at each other or being next to each other and shouting.

I am helping a girl at the front when I notice Gareth is not working. I go to him to find he has done nothing since I left him. We are now 30 minutes into the lesson and one boy has written just five digits on the whole of his worksheet. The noise level starts to pick up. I tell two girls to stop talking. Shelly has done no work at all, Jacky has almost finished the first sheet and stabs at it with her finger saying: "Look I'm working see, leave me alone."



I want to split them up but almost every desk is full, there are 30 in the class. I give Shelly an official warning (one more of these and she will be going to see the head) and move her to the end of a boy's desk. The boy, Philip, says Shelly is not sitting with

him and pushes her work off the desk. I give him an official warning too, and sit her down. All this time I am trying to help a girl called Samantha but can't get to her.

With ten minutes to go and most of the class working, I go around asking each student for their homework sheets; about seven of the 30 have done it. All of them have now got the second worksheet and I announce that their homework is to finish the second sheet. Because I am telling them what the homework is, most start to pack up. I tell them to get on with their work. Anthony, the boy who is always late, starts to walk out. When I challenge him he says that I have set the homework so the lesson is over. I pick up his worksheet and give it to him. When the bell does eventually ring he drops it as he leaves the room.

Period 5

Year 10 (14-15 year olds), set 6/6

Revising data-handling for first module of GCSE; we will be looking at Mean, Median, Mode and Range.

They drift in over the first 10 minutes; there are 11 in the group, three are absent and I have a learning support teacher. Five have no pen or pencil.

I ask if anyone can tell me the name of a type of average. Silence. Eventually Joe Marks says: "Middle one." I point to a poster describing them. Mike Simons reads the poster out loud and I ask him to tell me the mode of four numbers I have written on the board. He says 10 because that is the biggest number. I recap how to find the three types of average. I ask one girl to total the numbers on the board, she asks me for a calculator.

I explain again and start them off on the questions in the revision guide.

My learning support teacher works with three girls, I go around encouraging the others to work. They will all only work when being watched.

Most of this group wants to work but work means getting answers wrong, whereas sitting and talking means being able to say that you failed by choosing not to work, which is more bearable.

Tuesday

Period 1

Year 9 (13-14 year olds), mixed set 4/6 and 5/6

Most of the year 9 students are on a trip. We assemble all of the remaining ones in the largest room, take out about 12 of the brightest; and send them off with the head of department. The remainder we split into boys and girls; the girls go with two teachers and I take the boys. I give them A3 paper and start them on drawing posters based on maths symbols and words.

A few like drawing and get on quite well with their posters.

With about 10 minutes to go, a boy whom I don't know starts making a noise by breathing heavily; the noise is supposed to represent sexual intercourse. He has wrapped his legs around the leg of his table and has drawn quite a good sketch of a man and woman having sex doggie-style. I rip his paper up and give him another piece. I don't want a row.

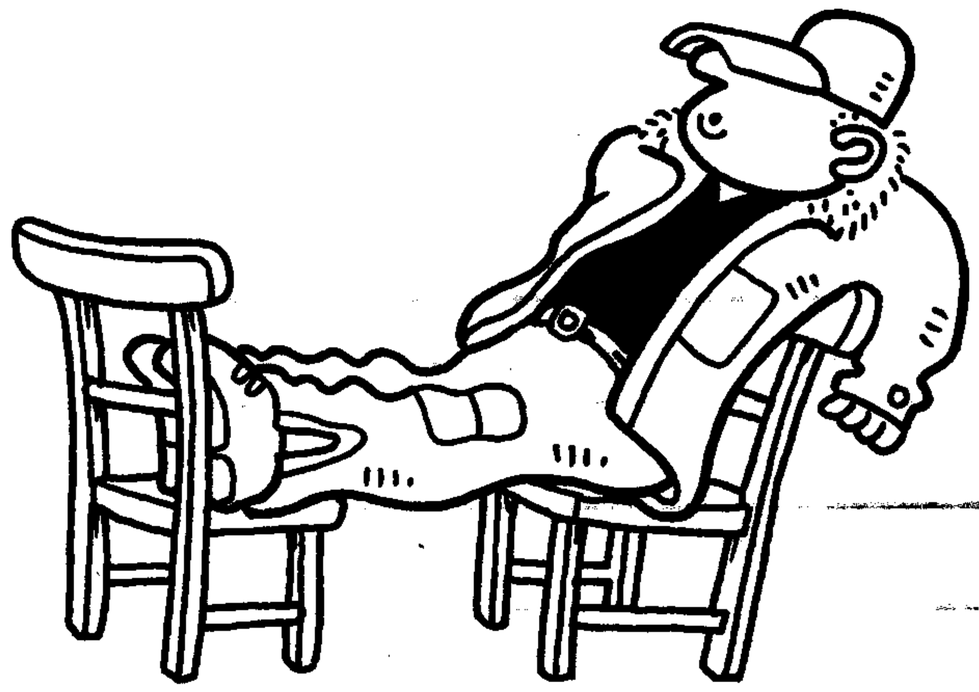
Period 2

Year 11 (15-16 year olds), set 8/8

The aim of the lesson is to revise data handling. This is a euphemistic title.

They each have worksheets photocopied from a revision guide. There are 15 in the group. Two are temporarily excluded, one is working in isolation for the day, one is now residing at Her Majesty's pleasure and three more have just stopped coming to school.

I always keep the enemy to my front and will walk a long way around the room to avoid exposing my back to them. They all sit one to a desk in one corner of the room; they smell and are weighed down with jewellery. I tell them all to take their coats off, the room is very hot but they still insist on sitting in them. Tim Gray (Anthony's brother) says: "That's all right sir, I won't bother today" and turns away; he puts his feet up on a chair and pretends to sleep. I walk up to him and take his baseball cap off his head. He jumps up and says: "Give it fucking back."



The others start to chant: "Jerry, Jerry." I try not to laugh and tell him that he can have it back either at the end of the day or when he takes his coat off. He slips the arms out of his coat so it hangs around his waist and I give him the cap back.

A few start work, Tim slips his coat back on but he is turned around, leaning against the wall by a radiator; 10 minutes later he takes it off completely.

John Collins is talking to two boys about the price of the gold chain he is going to have for his birthday. Paul Plant is colouring in his worksheet. Simon Blake is shading in each of the individual squares on a sheet of paper he has found. They are quiet and I don't really care.

Tim and another boy begin a conversation about a computer game. Most then join in; they compare three or four games. This goes on for about five minutes. Eventually I feel that I should stop it. I walk among them and point at their worksheets with the words: "Get on." Every one of them is indignant: they all come out with the line: "I've done all this" and stab their fingers at about two minutes' worth of work.

I stand in front of the door and remind them that it is break time next. They know that I will block the door and cost them time. I don't want to do this because it is my break as well. They don't work but they do become quiet.

Simon says in a stage whisper that if I don't move he'll kick me in the balls and stab me. John Collins tells me I should chill and smoke a joint; he takes out a packet of rolling tobacco and offers to roll me

one; they all laugh. I want to laugh but don't let myself.

The bell goes and they walk out. All of their "work" is on the floor: all of the worksheets have been defaced, the only pencil I get back has been broken into three.

This group has four different maths teachers. A few teachers have refused to teach them. Because maths is a core subject, as a department we decided that it was not fair to any one teacher to have them for three hours a week. There are two girls in the group; one has stopped coming and the other was working in isolation today, but I once heard them comparing notes on Tim's sexual performance. They had apparently had sex with him individually and as a threesome.

Nearly all in the group are on some form of behaviour control medication. Only two live with both of their natural parents. When you ask them about their ambitions, they reply with the word "college" — just the one word, with no idea of what subject they might take, what qualifications they want to get or what they might do with them afterwards. If you make a comparison between the quantity/quality of their work and what a future employer would expect, they reply with "I'd do more if I was being paid" or "I won't be doing maths then, will I?"

Period 3

Year 11 (15-16 year olds), set 4/8

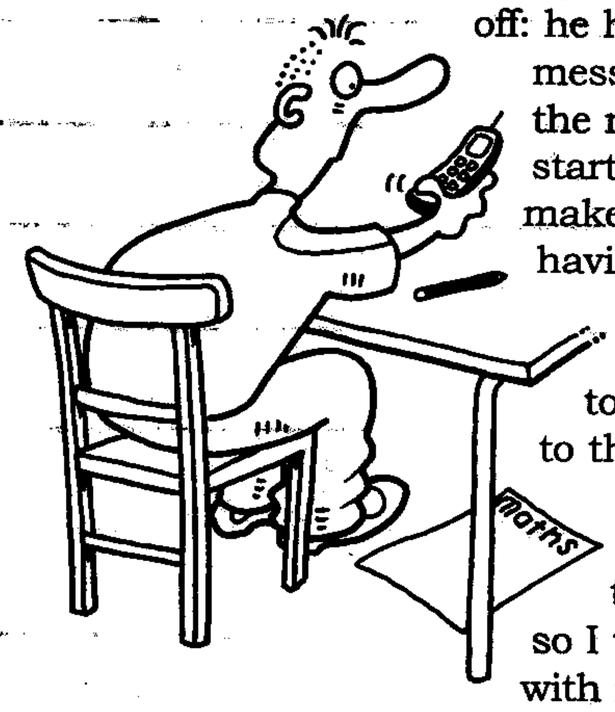
Revising frequency polygons from revision workbooks.

The class arrives over a 10-minute period. This is the first period after morning break and most of the pupils have just eaten for the first time since about 6pm yesterday. They are high on sugar. There are 34 in the group. I have enough tables for 30.

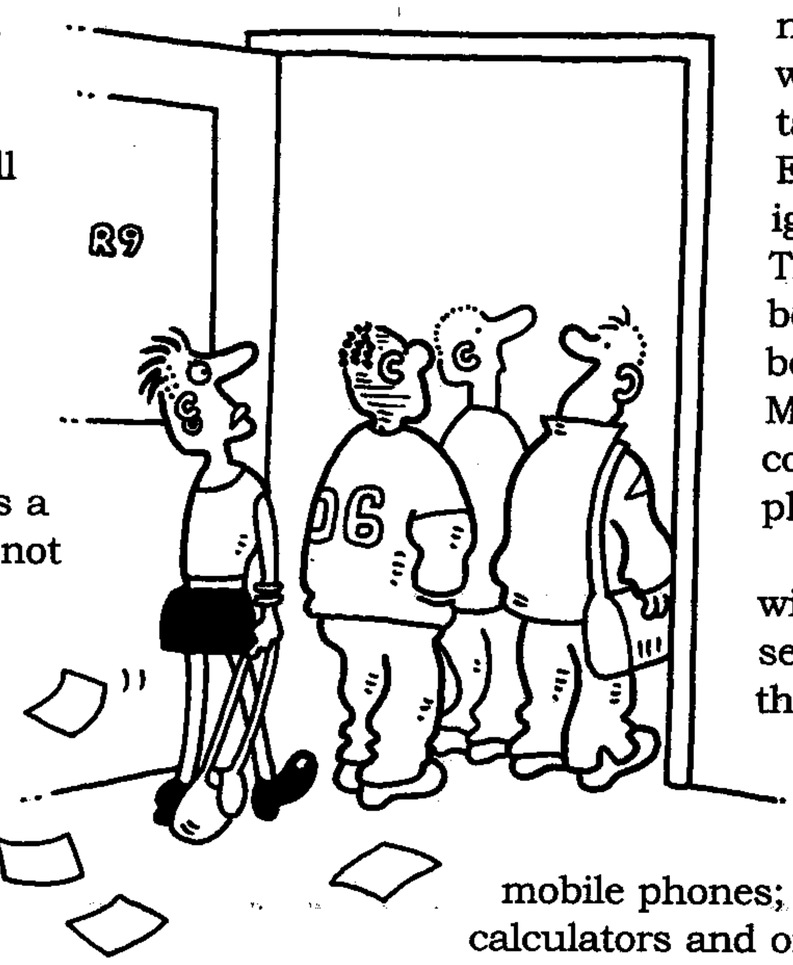
I give out the new revision guides. They have heard that they are getting them, they like them. A few start shading in the covers with highlighter pens.

I tell them the work to revise, draw a graph on the board and refer to the first question in the section. A mobile phone goes off and they all start to laugh. I should confiscate it but it isn't worth the argument. I start again, but the boy with the phone is now openly sending a text message. I tell him to stop. Without looking up, he tells me to hang on a minute.

Another phone in the room goes off: he has forwarded the message. Another boy in the room, Colin Jones, starts to laugh and then makes a noise as if he is having an orgasm. His mobile phone is in his pocket, switched to silent; he is referring to the vibration.



We start again. Most complain that they can already do it so I tell them to get on with it. Five students have no pen or pencil. About half get on with the revision, the rest start to talk. I notice one girl is doing her English homework. She's quiet so I ignore it. At least she's working. The telephone message turns out to be a picture message and soon it is being forwarded around the room. Most of the students begin conversations comparing mobile phones.



I announce that if the playing with phones does not stop, I will send for senior management and the once-a-week fun lesson won't happen. Most put the phones away. Ninety-five percent of the children in the school have mobile phones; only about five percent have calculators and only about two percent of those know how to turn their calculators on.

This group has their first GCSE exam in four weeks' time. Most of them have already given up. They aspire to nothing more than casual work and an intricate understanding of the benefits system. Others say they want to go to university: four kids recently have told me that they want to be marine biologists. Why this has become such a popular ambition I do not know. None of them does any homework. When I told them that they would need a maths qualification for a science degree, one girl replied that she wanted to study fish, not count them.

As set 4 of 8, this group should be average. They are bright enough to coordinate their defiance, concentrating their abuse on personal comments: bad breath, BO, poor teaching. They are also bright enough to realise that they are going to fail and to care about it.

Period 6

Year 8 (12-13 year olds), set 5/6

The lesson is about quadrilaterals. It is the one I didn't teach on Monday.

After Monday's lesson I tried to telephone some of their parents. Out of five numbers I looked up in the school office, all but one was a mobile number. Only one was actually functioning. I spoke to Susan White's mother. Now Gill Black comes in and tells me that Susan has been grounded for a week and it is my fault.

They are generally quiet. Sam Foster has been excluded for a week and Brian Moor is working in isolation so I can expect a better lesson.

I begin with a number sequence. At first they take no interest but then most join in, calling out the next term. A few ask sensible questions.

I sketch a shape, put in some angles and ask if any one can find out the missing angle. One or two put their hands up (the ones I would expect). Billy starts talking to Mark Anderson. As they are at different ends of the room, this means shouting. I tell Billy to stand outside. He starts pulling faces at the door of my room. Then the door opens and he throws in a paper aeroplane. I ignore it.

When the bell goes for the end of school, they all stand up to leave. I tell them to sit down: they can go when they have copied down the homework. I am standing by the main door to the corridor but it makes no difference. Most of the class simply walk

out through the door at the back of the room which leads into the nextdoor classroom. When the teacher in there tells them to go back, they tell her to chill and get a life. Tracy Jones attempts to push past me to leave by the main door. She tells me I can't keep her in because she has got rights.

This is a common complaint. They all have lots of rights. They know how long you can hold them back after school without notice; they know how much time they are allowed at break. They know the nights that they are supposed to have homework and complain bitterly when it is set on a wrong night, even though they never do it anyway. I just wish they would put as much energy into remembering their multiplication tables.

Wednesday

Period 2,

Year 11 (15-16 year olds), set 4/8

More work on the revision guides, concentrating on Mean, Median, Mode and Range.

The class straggle in up to 10 minutes late. I don't mind this because it is the nutters who are late, and they make it easy for me because they are a divided enemy when they arrive in ones and twos.

I give out the revision guides. At least 12 students ask me the difference between the three types of average. Each time I point to the highlighted box where the definitions are written. This work is easy for them, they all get on with some work, and their language is more or less acceptable. They get on to mean averages. Virtually all ask me for a calculator. I give out one per desk.

My head of department comes in to talk to them about the next month's exam. They all attempted the first modular exam of the GCSE in year 10 and most got grade D. They show little interest in trying for a grade C; the general muttering is that they failed once, why should they fail it again? I know that at least half of the group could get grade C if they worked.

There are a few kids in this group who do work. How they manage it in the middle of all this chaos I will never know. I really admire these children. Others — mostly girls — want to pass and always begin each lesson working in silence, but start to distract each other after about 10 minutes. But most of the boys have simply given up. They have decided they are going to fail (they are probably not wrong) and they can see little point in working.

The brighter ones who could have passed their exams if they had done some work are beginning to realise this. They are like long-distance runners who have left their final sprint too late. They now realise that they have left working too late; they know that they cannot make up two to three wasted years in six months.

However, true to form, their failure cannot be their fault. Some blame me for their lack of knowledge. Others think it is the fault of a supply teacher who took them for a term two years ago. But any failure has positively nothing to do with them. It is always someone else's fault. Even when sacked from work-experience placements and made to listen to the written statements about their behaviour made by complete strangers, they refuse to admit to a fault of any kind.

If I could take these students back to year nine with the attitude that they now have, they could all pass with grade B. But to most, this lesson is an irrelevance. I run after-school revision classes and a few girls come to them. I have heard some of the boys say that only queers go to revision classes.

Period 4

Year 9 (13-14 year olds), set 5/6

A new topic: angles on straight lines and about a point.

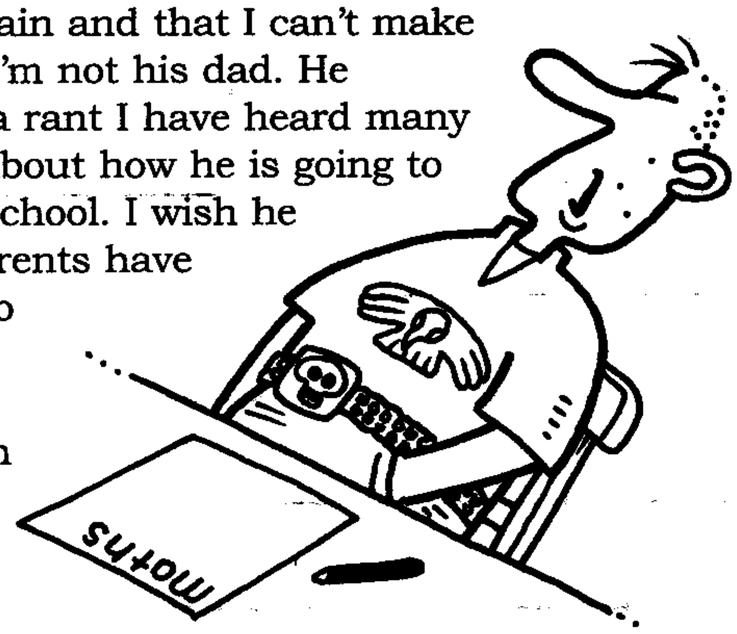
The class arrive to find their books on their desks and some easy addition questions on the board for them to start. My support teacher urges them to begin work. James Brodie says: "Yeah, all right, in a minute. Can't you see I'm talking?"

I send him out; he stands up but continues his conversation. I pick on the boy he is talking to, Gareth Burns, and tell him to start work. He replies in a very aggrieved tone that he can't because "she won't give me a pen." By "she" he means my support teacher. She offers him a pencil; Gareth says that he's not writing in pencil like a kid. I remind him that we are not supposed to lend any equipment. He picks up his bag, takes a pen from the side pocket, holds it up by my nose and says: "There, stick your pencil." He then throws the bag against the wall.

I begin asking easy questions. The range of abilities is very wide. Half of the class can take 103 from 180 in their heads. Half cannot take 150 from 180 on paper with confidence.

Then the Head comes in with three boys who are missing and takes out two more. Her presence outside the door silences the class.

I tell them they are to sketch each angle from the workbook and provide the missing figures, showing all working-out. After about three minutes Gareth shouts out that he has finished. I go to him. He has written a list of numbers down the side of his page, none of which relate to the questions; some are values over 500. He says that he's not doing them again; I tell him he has no choice. He puts on his aggrieved tone again and shouts that he is not going to do them again and that I can't make him because I'm not his dad. He finishes with a rant I have heard many times before about how he is going to find another school. I wish he would. His parents have applied for two other local schools in the last year. Both turned him down.



Period 5

Year 8 (12-13 year olds), set 5/6

This lesson carries on the work on quadrilaterals. By the end of the lesson, I want them to realise that opposite angles in a parallelogram are equal.

I have ten parallelograms drawn on the board, the first five with only one missing angle. I am going to hit them running, no lesson starter: straight into the work. I have a learning support teacher with this group for two lessons out of six, but today I am on my own.

They arrive over a 10-minute period. As usual it's the more capable ones who arrive on time. Initially they are all quiet and begin work. Brian Moor is in isolation. But Sam Foster is back in lessons. At the first opportunity, I am going to throw him out. I know I won't have to wait long for an excuse. When I give Mark Anderson an official warning for shouting, Sam says without looking at me: "Sir, you know nobody likes you, all the kids hate you."

I am helping at the back when I see Sam pull the centre pages out of his book. I let him get on with making a paper clapper. He waves it above his head; I snatch it from him, he shouts that I have hurt his finger and he is going to the police. I take his book from him and move him to the empty classroom behind mine; I give him a simple adding worksheet. The room is empty: my hope is that he will run off. He obliges after writing on his sheet that I am gay, a bastard and a pervert. I am amazed that he spells all three correctly.

They all work quite well; by the end, the ones I would expect to have realised that opposite angles in a parallelogram are equal. It has taken four one-hour lessons to reach this point. Maybe five of them will remember what they have learnt by next week.

We teachers often control the behaviour of the class with the work that we set. Easy work that creates no insecurity will result in reasonable behaviour. Difficult work that creates self-doubt will be meet with aggression. This constantly leads to the dilemma: do we set hard work that will stretch them but also lead to poor behaviour and so cost learning time? Or do we set easy work and get reasonable behaviour — and more teaching time — in return?

I kept them quiet by giving them work that did not make them feel insecure (ie easy work) and by not challenging them about their work rate. I should have been able to stop them after 15 minutes, explain harder work and push them to think. I didn't because of the issues of controlling them that this would have created. There are times when we mistake activity and silence for learning.

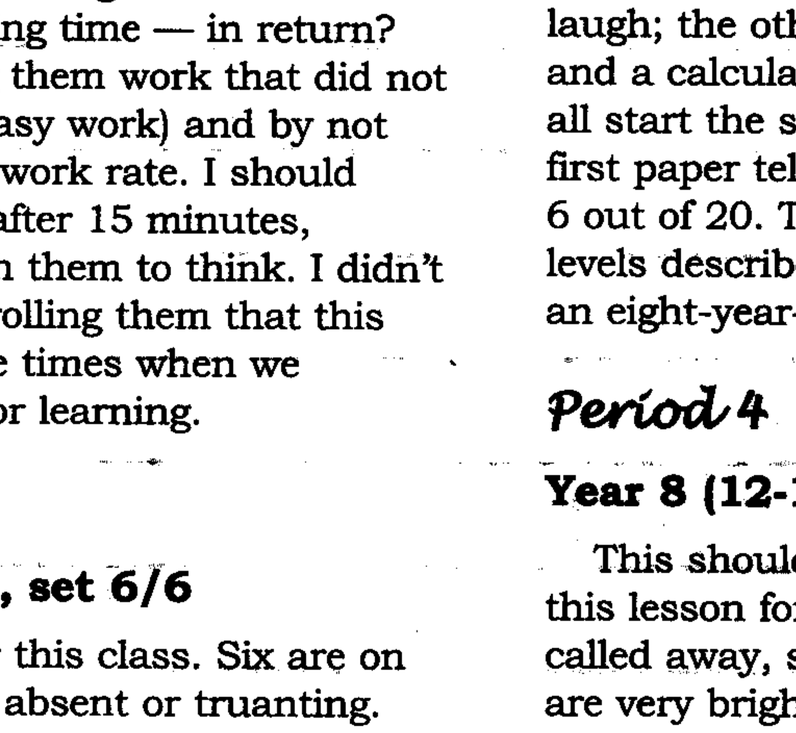
Period 6

Year 10 (14-15 year olds), set 6/6

There are 13 on the roll for this class. Six are on work experience and four are absent or truanting. Only one of the three pupils present has a pen.

With only three students, it is possible to sit around a desk with all of them. You can look straight into their eyes. There is nothing there. You explain: they say yes. Your questions start off okay, but quickly become "finish my sentence" type questions and eventually "complete the last syllable of the last word."

They work well for half an hour and so as a reward I give them the rest of the lesson to do what they want to do. One girl asks me for a sheet of paper and a pair of compasses. She draws a circle with semicircles on the circumference. She tells me that it's a flower and begins to shade it in. Lost in the motion of the shading, she looks like a primary school child. She is not certain what 5 x 6 is but claims to be sexually active.



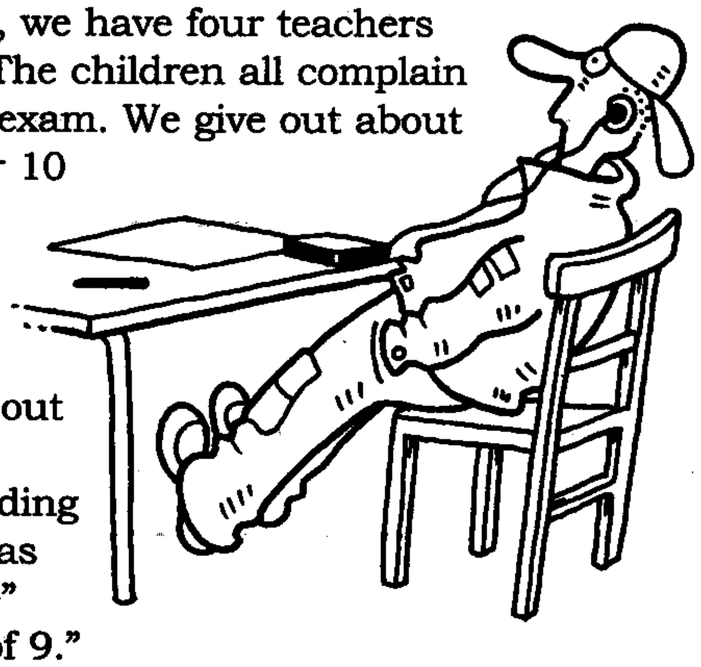
Thursday

Period 3

Year 10 (14-15 year olds), set 6/6 and set 5/6

They are all doing a mock exam; we set the room up as much like an exam room as possible. They have two 20-minute papers.

With support, we have four teachers to 30 children. The children all complain about doing an exam. We give out about 20 pencils. After 10 minutes they start to say they have finished. They have all missed out most of the questions, including questions such as "Find 50% of 60" and "one third of 9."



We encourage them to go through and check their answers. At 15 minutes, most are quiet but shading in the front cover. Mike Simmons has his Walkman on and Leann Harman puts her head on the desk and closes her eyes.

Ray Stone starts to rock back on his chair. I tell him off and he deliberately falls off. They all start to laugh; the other teacher gives out the second paper and a calculator, which attracts their attention. They all start the second paper. A quick look through the first paper tells me most have scored between 4 and 6 out of 20. Their average ability, judged against the levels described in the national curriculum, is that of an eight-year-old.

Period 4

Year 8 (12-13 year olds), set 1/6

This should be my free period but I am covering this lesson for my head of department. He has been called away, so no work has been set. The children are very bright; they have been doing work on brackets.

I write 20 questions on the board while one of them gives the books out; their behaviour is impeccable while I am doing this. They have all arrived within three minutes of the start, one boy apologises for not having a pen. They all begin. One girl has done the questions as fast as I can write them. I find a GCSE foundation book with a short exercise in and give this to her.

Most of these children could do the foundation paper I have just given to the year 10s with no problem. They take pleasure in doing as much work as they can.

The girl who finished first asks me for some harder work. I find a higher level GCSE book and give her an exercise with two pairs of brackets. I give one quick explanation and she is off. The boys in the room start to get a bit bored and talk quietly, *while working*. They are a delight to teach. An oasis of calm in the middle of all the madness.

Period 5

Year 8 (12-13 year olds), set 5/6

Lee Hollis, a boy I haven't seen for two weeks (he has been on short-term exclusion), comes in and sits by Billy. The room is quiet so I ask him quietly to move. He looks up and says: "No!" His "no" is elongated and loud.

I point to the seat I want him to move to; he shrugs his shoulders and looks away from me. I move around the desk and get right in his face and tell him to leave; I know that this will wind him up. He jumps up and suggests he should sit in another place but not the one I pointed to. There is nothing wrong with this suggestion other than that it is not the one I want. I refuse because I know he will walk out. He obliges by leaving through the back door, pushing other students' work off the desk as he goes. *Result.* He's gone. I send a note to the office: with luck, he will get into mischief and be excluded again.

Last year when the Ofsted inspection was announced, Lee was removed to a tuition unit outside the school until the inspectors had left. Other children were moved out of the classroom and into the school's inclusion unit, while all the part-time staff were brought in on full-time hours. The inspection team concluded that there was "much good teaching and effective learning taking place", although "behaviour in some lessons is unsatisfactory." Actually, the children are all such show-offs they behaved much better than usual when the inspectors were in the room.

For the remainder of this lesson their behaviour is generally good. We do all of the work and move on to the extension work. I write good work certificates for Billy and Mark and put them in envelopes to give to their mothers.

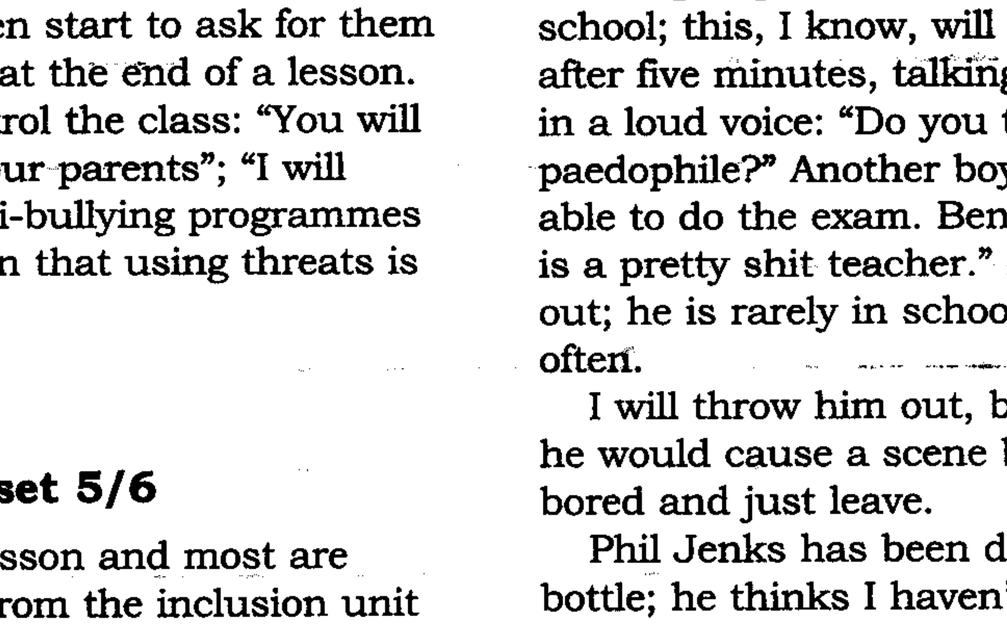
I have stocks of positive letters and certificates but too often I do not use them. I am aware that children respond well to positive praise, but too often it is difficult to find the goodwill to use them; also, there is the problem that the children start to ask for them and it becomes another issue at the end of a lesson. Instead we use threats to control the class: "You will lose your break"; "I will call your parents"; "I will keep you behind." We run anti-bullying programmes and constantly tell the children that using threats is unacceptable.

Period 6

Year 9 (13-14 year olds), set 5/6

I am 15 minutes into the lesson and most are working well when a teacher from the inclusion unit arrives and asks me if I will have Reann Smith (the child from hell) in my lesson. She has been in the unit for four weeks and they are trying to get her into a few lessons before half term.

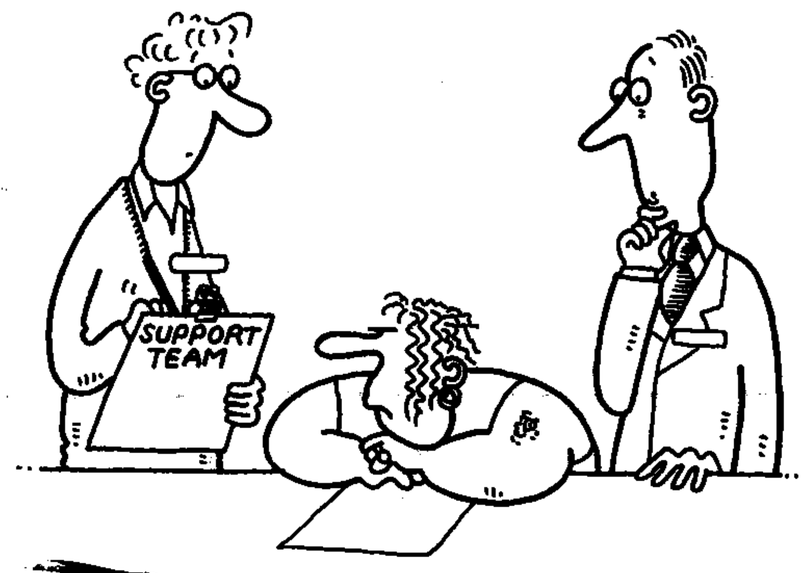
The class is quiet and I mistakenly think that the support teacher will stop with her. I agree and Reann comes in. I point to a seat by a quiet on-task girl; I feel sorry for her. Reann refuses and sits by Jacky Willis. She will not move. I send a note to the inclusion unit. Reann sits in silence, in a sulk. This is an improvement of sorts: in the past she has thrown books and even a chair.



Her support teacher returns and sits with her, talking to her about the benefits of following rules. She replies with a series of four letter words. The support teacher leaves and returns with the deputy head. The three of them now discuss the benefits of following rules and remind Reann how much she wants to be in lessons.

The rest of the class are silent throughout this, and we have an excellent lesson, partly because of the in-house entertainment, partly because of those who are missing or on report and partly because of the presence of the deputy head.

At break-time we leave Reann, her support teacher and the deputy head still in negotiation. They are discussing the contract which they drew up regarding Reann's behaviour in lessons, which includes phrases like "I will try to be good in lessons" and "I know I should not tell people to fuck off". The cost of the specialist support Reann has received over the last half term is probably the equivalent of the fees for a good public school for the same length of time.



Friday

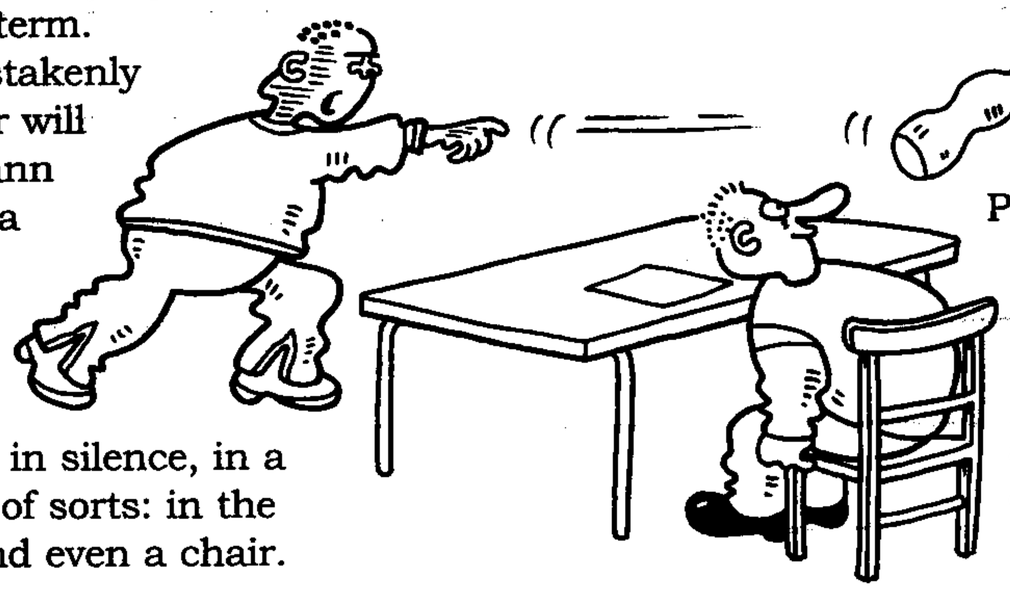
Period 1

Year 11 (15-16 year olds), set 4/8

The group is doing a mock exam. Ben Brooks is in school; this, I know, will be a problem. He starts after five minutes, talking to the boy in front of him in a loud voice: "Do you think sir looks like a paedophile?" Another boy moans about not being able to do the exam. Ben comes back with: "Well, sir is a pretty shit teacher." He wants me to throw him out; he is rarely in school and in lessons even less often.

I will throw him out, but not yet. At the moment he would cause a scene but in 15 minutes he will be bored and just leave.

Phil Jenks has been drinking from a plastic Coke bottle; he thinks I haven't seen it. I just can't be bothered with the row. The bottle is now empty; my lack of action has emboldened him so he starts to throw it up and catch it. I take it off him and throw it in the bin. Ben shouts: "Thief", gets up, goes to the front, takes it out of the bin and throws it to Phil.



Even the likes of Colin and Phil don't like Ben. I tell him to leave. As he goes, Phil throws the bottle at him. Ben calls him a cunt.

Ben has a very sad and

dysfunctional background. His father is a violent drug addict; he never knew his mother and has had five or six addresses in four years. There are no stable, reliable adults in his life; every adult he has ever known has let him down, including his teachers, including me.

Period 3

Year 8 (12-13 year olds), set 5/6

Mark Anderson is wearing a Nike baseball cap. He tells me his mother bought it for him last night because of the certificate I gave him. Billy comes in with my support teacher; she has caught him hiding under the stairs. He asks if he can have another certificate today, completely oblivious to the fact he has just tried to truant my lesson.

It is, however, a good lesson. While we were discussing a question on the board, Tracy Jones looked up an answer on the tables-square on the wall and the whole class was quiet while she did this. Encouraged by this I decided the work I had planned is not hard enough so I give out some year 9 textbooks. The entire lesson is a success; we finish with some table chanting, they volunteer to try and recite them. It is almost like when I had this class at the start of year 7.

By the end of the lesson we have done twice as much as I would have expected. I send several positive notes home to parents.

I wish I knew what was in the water today: I would pay for it to be added. This was real teaching to more or less receptive students. I enjoyed it and so did most of them.

I am happy. Why am I happy? I am happy because my students came into the room quietly, did as they were told, were not rude and more or less listened when I needed them to. I am happy because my students acted like polite, civilised human beings.

Isn't there is something wrong when we have to celebrate socially acceptable behaviour?

Period 5

Year 11 (1-16 year olds), set 4/8

I give out the exam papers from yesterday, and photocopies of the paper with model answers and explanations that I prepared last night and photocopied today. They all begin to moan at the amount of paper that they have been given. Phil Jenks says to Pam Cook: "What's the fucking point in this?" Colin Jones starts copying the model answers on to his actual exam paper. I watch him do it.

I ask if they have all got their papers back. I tell them to start comparing their answers with the model answers. Phil shouts that I have missed half of his marks off. I ignore this. A girl I like calls me over; she has added the marks on the paper and found I have miscounted by one, so I alter her mark and we laugh about it. Phil shouts that this is a load of crap and I can't even add up.

Then my prayers are answered: a prefect comes in to say that all year 11 students are to go to the main hall because of a dinner-time incident. There is a God.

Student-based learning, giving them space, is one of the things that I believe in most. Phil's comment – "What's the fucking point in this?" — is the attitude of about half of them. Comparing answers that they have got wrong to model answers, asking questions of their own knowledge, thinking reflectively, are the most effective way of learning. Phil, like many, feels insecure when asked to learn like this; they have too much space, so consequently they stand still. They hate teacher-led learning because that means listening and the occasional discomfort of being asked a question, but being led is easier than guiding yourself.

What happened next

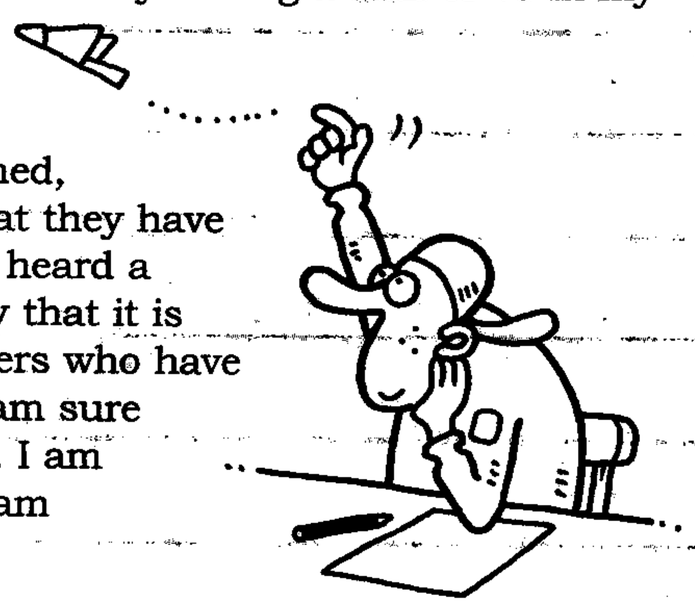
The year 11s all took their GCSEs. The 4/8 set — the ones with theoretically average ability — mostly got grade F. The entire 8/8 group failed.

Ben Brooks stopped coming to school. Colin Jones called an outside invigilator "a fucking cunt" during an exam and was not allowed back to school. Michel Jordan from the year 9 group assaulted a teacher, went to live with his father and stopped coming to school. Lee Hollis and Sam Foster from the year 8 group have been put on reduced timetables and only come to school for three hours a day. During that time, Sam assaulted a lab technician and is now waiting for the exclusion panel to meet. Brian Moor has moved school again, making five schools since he was 11.

After five phone calls home, Anthony Gray's parents came into school. His father told me that his son's poor time-keeping, attendance, punctuality and lack of equipment were his mother's fault. She sat in the background trembling. He said that he would sort it out. As they left the meeting room I heard Anthony say: "Are you going to slap her, Dad?" His behaviour improved for one week then returned to "normal".

I can only look at this situation from the point of view I am qualified for: a mathematical one. There are 168 hours in a week. Allowing eight hours a night for sleep, children are awake for 112 hours a week. They spend 30 to 35 hours a week in school, that is, about 30% of their lives. Teachers have a responsibility but our children are out of school for twice the length of time that they are in it — not including holidays. A lesson lasts for one hour. If 15 minutes are lost to poor behaviour, that is exactly 25% of school time lost. That is the same as losing one-and-a-third academic years or, if you prefer, from Easter of year 10 and all of year 11 from the time spent in secondary school.

Some teachers have a natural ability to control. I know teachers who can walk into a room and all in there instantly fall quiet. I am not one of these teachers; they are very rare. There are perhaps three teachers with this ability among a staff of 40 in my school. Some of their skills are transferable and can be learned, but much of what they have is innate. I have heard a head teacher say that it is only some teachers who have problems and I am sure that that is true. I am also sure that I am one of them.



Legal News

IF Peter Carter-Fuck weren't dead already, the shock of hearing the latest news would surely have killed him. As *The Lawyer* reported last week: "Peter Carter-Fuck and Partners is set to see its fees slashed after coming under intense pressure from national newspapers concerning excessive costs in libel actions."

Carter-Fuck always regarded excessive costs as his most basic human right, and the firm that bears his name is maintaining this grand tradition – particularly through exploiting the new system of conditional fee arrangements (CFAs). These are commonly known as "no win no fee", but if the plaintiff *does* win, Carter-Fuck and partners feel entitled to add to their normal charges a 100 percent success fee (charmingly known as an "uplift"), thus doubling the costs which the loser has to pay.

The *Guardian* recently highlighted a slander case being brought on behalf of a police inspector against a chief constable, noting that if it succeeded, Carter-Fuck's bill could double from £750,000 to £1.5m. The paper asked Barton Taylor, a partner at Carter-Fuck, if it was fair that defendants should have to pay huge extra "winnings" to the lawyers. "Life's not fair really, is it?" he replied cheerfully.

Now, however, there are signs that fairness may be forced upon Taylor and his colleagues. Last month a judge rejected the extravagant fees demanded in a CFA-funded case brought on behalf of a taxi-driver against the *Sun*: Carter-Fuck had submitted a bill for £92,000, which the costs judge reduced to just £33,000. And two weeks ago the firm earned a stinging rebuke from appeal court judges in a "no win no fee" libel case brought against the *Sunday Telegraph* on behalf of a British Muslim, Adam Musa King.

Last summer the *Telegraph* tried unsuccessfully to have the action struck out as an abuse of process, claiming that Carter-Fuck was using the CFA system to hold the paper to ransom.

Hearing the *Telegraph*'s appeal against that judgment two weeks ago, Lord Justice Brooke complained about the disproportionate length of a 10-page letter sent by Carter-Fuck at the outset of the case. "What's going on?" he asked incredulously. "What would [lord chief justice] Lord Woolf say?" Of another Carter-Fuck letter, he commented: "Lord Woolf would have had an absolute fit if he had seen this letter. I'm not going to refer it to him, because he has other things to do."

The judges also had several criticisms of CFAs in general. As Lord Justice Parker observed: "The effect of CFA cases is to take the client out of the equation – there's no concern if costs are getting out of hand."

Although Carter-Fuck and Partners have refused to comment on the case until judgment is issued, they must be worried. Following concerted pressure and legal threats from national newspapers, the firm conceded last week that it would be willing to agree a "protocol" with media organisations, reducing the "uplift" it charges in some CFA cases. But there is now a possibility that the government will abolish success fees altogether. For Carter-Fuck, which derives no less than 30 percent of its income from contingency-fee libel work, it is hard to imagine a more appalling prospect.

DOWN ON THE FARM

WHILE Defra's political mistress Rosa Klebb, aka Margaret Beckett, swans around the world talking about the environment at a series of hot-air conventions, the crisis in British farming is deepening and her junior minister Ben Bradshaw is looking more hopelessly ineffectual than ever.

First, there is the single farm payment fiasco. Upland farmers in what Defra calls "severely disadvantaged areas" face disaster thanks to Rosa's decision that, when the new EU subsidy system comes into force in January, they will get only a third of the subsidies received by other farmers in England. Fearing this will drive hill farmers out of business, the industry has joined with conservation groups like the RSPB to produce a counter-proposal, which might allow some hill farms to survive. But until Rosa returns, Defra officials say they cannot respond.

Just as great is the disaster facing thousands of orchards growing apples, pears, plums and cherries. Defra has decided these will receive no subsidy at all, unless their fruit trees are grubbed up by the end of the year. If they are, owners can put in for £230 per hectare, just like the owners of any other farmland even if they grow nothing on it. Continental fruit growers will continue to receive hefty subsidies. Only in England are Rosa and her officials determined to ensure that hundreds of thousands of fruit trees go up in smoke.

Then there is the epidemic of badger-borne TB threatening Britain's cattle herd. Facing a blizzard of questions from Tory agriculture spokesman Owen Paterson, Defra admits that culling sick badgers eliminates TB in cattle. Confronted by one Devon farmer, Tony Yewdall, whose farm is swarming with sick badgers and has just lost a quarter of his pedigree Guernsey herd, Bradshaw weakly promised that he would consider giving Yewdall a licence to cull all the sick badgers on his farm. But he then admitted to MPs that there was no way Yewdall or any other farmer will be permitted to cull badgers, even though this is allowed under the Badger Protection Act 1992.

Since Defra can offer no other solution, the total bill to taxpayers for slaughtering TB-infected cattle is set to rise in the next ten years, on Defra's figures, to £2bn.

Then there is the shambles over Defra's "fallen stock disposal" scheme. A year ago, to comply with EU regulations, Defra made it a criminal offence for farmers to bury dead animals on their farm. But Defra has still failed to put in place its promised arrangements for millions of dead animals to be collected for rendering down and incineration, leaving farmers with no alternative but to break the law. While Bradshaw has no answer to any of the above, Mrs Klebb continues her world tour apparently without a flicker of concern.

'Muckspreader'

Letters

Private Eye

Christian message

Sir,

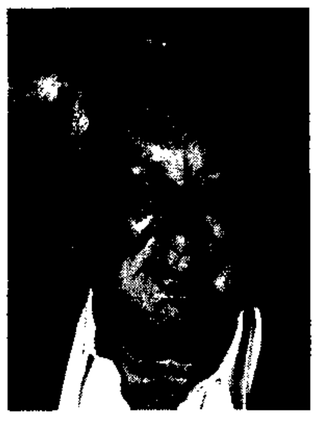
I feel that I must take issue with the Vicar of St Albion for his use of the expression "Christian" names in his Newsletter. Certainly, in this part of the world, it is a word that is frowned upon. Lecturers at the local college were recently warned not to use such an insulting and, potentially, inflammatory word as "Christian". When our own vicar uses such archaic and unacceptable language, perhaps it is time to be thinking of a new incumbent.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK NOLAN,

Beverley, E. Yorks.

Lookalike

Winner



Quaker

Sir,

I have noticed a startling similarity between a famous film director and the Quaker Oats man. Surely they are related in some form?

Calm down, dear!

Regards,
MARIA KEMP,

Glossop, Derbyshire.

A McVicar writes...

Sir,

In less than a year, your leaking colostomy bag Bookworm – aka Skidmark – has dumped on Artnik Books and its publisher Valentina three times. Twice she has protested and listed the inaccuracies, selective reporting and, most of all, how he never observes the basic journalistic safeguard of putting his allegations to her or anyone at Artnik.

All three reports insinuate that she was lucky to escape conviction for murder in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1998. In fact, she was exonerated rather than acquitted. The evidence proved that she had nothing to do with the murder. Skidmark, however, never consults anyone except the Charlottesville DA because his agenda is always to smear and damage her as a publisher.

All three reports are unrelentingly loaded, yet Private Eye never guttersniped at her until she married me! Is this payback for the three years I rode shotgun at Punch, your rag's erstwhile rival, and my run-in with Paul Foot over his Hanratty-is-innocent twaddle? People have got on your smuggish editor's spite-list for a lot less.

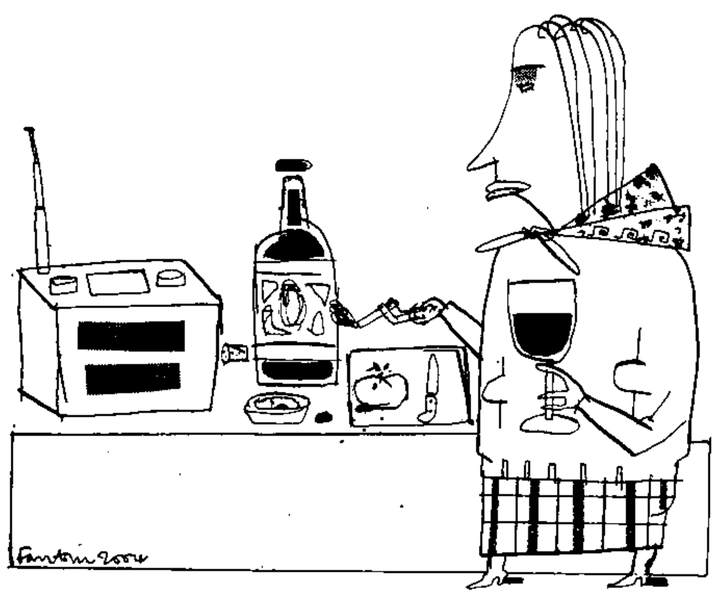
Incidentally, contrary to your last report, I do not own one share in Artnik nor did I author A Right to Kill. I did edit it, which is why it is typo-ridden, incoherent and, according to Tony Martin and doubtless Skidmark, full of "malicious lies".

Just don't mention that it also shows how an anointed alliance of Max Clifford, a cause-mongering print media, mumbo-jumbo quacks and an intellectually corrupt appeal court ensured that Martin got away with murder.

Cheers,
JOHN McVICAR,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Smooth classics at seven... Relax... Next, on Classic FM, Stockhausen. His Mikrophonie for tam-tam, two microphones and two filters with potentiometers"

PFEye

Sir,

"As the government expects the private sector to shoulder the risk of things going wrong, the consortia simply add ever bigger margins to their bids" — Private Eye 1103, p10.

"'Refinancing'... is the process whereby companies who can't make enough on the sums they have agreed should be paid to them by the taxpayer manage to get their contracts 'refinanced' – ie, they are given huge slices of extra public money as a reward". — Private Eye 1103, p26.

So would you prefer that the organisations who run light-rail systems decrease the bid margin and then ask for more money later; or that those that run hospitals submit tenders with ever larger margins?

Otherwise, keep up the good work.

Yours,
PAUL SMITH,

Via email.

Clear audit

Sir,

I read Henry Slicker's article in issue 1103. He/she is wrong: the solution is not the rotation of audit firms and certainly not partners within the firms. Why? Because the audit of pension and finance businesses is too complex and as a result knowledge of it is limited to a small group of accounting practices, growing ever smaller with each merger. The answer is to beef up the regulators and turn them into an audit body. No need to make profit, no business consequences, just clean clear audit.

I write as one of the first two women ever elected to the council of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and a former partner in a city firm.

JANE ALLAN,

Andover, Hants.

Mind the age gap

Sir,

As someone who is getting on in years, I was greatly cheered by the enclosed picture of an elderly gentleman out with his attractive young carer (Independent on Sunday, 28 March 2004). Is this service provided by the NHS? Or do you simply have to be very rich? And do you have any other photographs of old blokes in similar situations?

Yours sincerely,
GILL FIGG (MRS),

Swansea.

Salman & Padma

Brillo & Pad

Toby jugged

Sir,

You are quite right to report that Boris Johnson "sacked" me in the course of a bibulous, and immensely entertaining, lunch in Westminster. But as he made it clear he wants me to carry on writing for The Spectator on topics away from the sports field I did not take my demotion too badly. In fact I did my best to get Frank Keating back in the saddle, and I am delighted he has returned.

There are, of course, many wonderful writers in the Spectator. That is why the brigade of solipsists, led by the talentless, shameless Young, invite ridicule.

Yours,
AN ECCENTRIC, OPERA-LOVING SPORTS SCRIBE,
(aka MICHAEL HENDERSON),

Via email.

Tram trauma

Sir,

Dr B. Ching misses the point in the Edinburgh tram case (Signal Failures, Eye 1103). We do not need a tram system here and especially one having the routing suggested. The Edinburgh proposal would be for the sole benefit of private developers. Uniquely, on behalf of our council, it would be sanctioned by, justified by, procured by, designed by and operated by private interests. The dealings of Partnerships UK plc are worthy of an Eye investigation; you missed it in your recent PFI feature. The one point at which citizens would have input is when we pay our council tax to build the disaster and guarantee the operator's profit. Our publicly owned bus company is second to none but does need modernising.

Yours,
JOHN BARKESS,

Edinburgh.

Sir,

So Dr B. Ching claims "in some cities light rail is undermined by bus firms using cheaper vehicles and offering lower fares in competition" which he sees as a pernicious plot to thwart the spread of trams. So those dastardly free market operators are undermining the nirvana of subsidised public transport. Jolly good for them I say.

As we are learning again from experience, trams are expensive and require massive subsidies to survive – see the experience of Nottingham and the Croydon Tramlink. Of course the users like them because typically they don't pay the true costs, but it would be cheaper to put on gold-plated buses running every five minutes than install a modern tram system. Trams and trolley buses were almost all scrapped 50 years ago in the UK because it was cheaper to run buses. As it is now, but politicians think that renaming it "light rail" will conceal the truth. As George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it", so I confidently predict that the Nottingham and Croydon trams will be replaced by buses when they wear out.

ROGER LAWSON,

Chislehurst, Kent.

"Oh no! Easter egg hunt saboteurs!"

I HAVE been forced to put pen to paper.

Name supplied
Daventry
Via email

Letter to Daventry Express

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Breaking news... I'm just hearing about the death of the actor, wit and raconteur Peter Ustinov... a living legend...."
MATTHEW WRIGHT, Channel 5
(Tim Freeman)

"He turned, and instinctively the ball was in the back of the net."
PAUL McDOWELL, Talksport
(Martin Baker)

Ray Stubbs: *That's [Manchester Utd 0 Fulham 1] a great start for Fulham, Mark.*
Mark Lawrenson: *Yes, and paradoxically it's a terrible start for United.*
(Sean Farrell)

"Steve Moxon unleashed a can of worms..."
MARGARET GILMORE, BBC
(Stephen Butcher)

"I was inbred into the game by my father."
DAVID PLEAT
(Jonathan Steele)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

Letter from **Salvador**

from Our Own Correspondent

"EL SALVADOR will be the tomb where the Reds meet their end." This ditty was the song of the death squads during the civil war of the 1980s – and it remains the anthem of the right-wing Arena party which last month won the presidency for the fourth time in succession.

The official version is that El Salvador is a success story: we made peace; we privatised; we scrapped our own currency and brought in the dollar; now we are an oasis of capitalist enterprise in Central America. We voted for Arena, and massively so: the party defeated its leftist former guerrilla rivals in the FLMN by more than 20 percent.

But success comes in many forms and our levels of inequality are unrivalled even in Africa. Naturally, our oligarchs pay almost no tax. These stalwart patriots were also the obvious custodians to benefit from the wholesale bargain-price disposal of our state enterprises. Rightly, they also control the most important media, which gave us such fine and balanced coverage during the presidential contest.

Their front man is Tony Saca, our new bulldog of a president, who at 39 years old is in his first political job. He's best known as a sports broadcaster and housewives' favourite – a sort of younger, Latino version of your Des Lynam. He has a certain charm and – crucially – is young enough not to have dirtied his hands too badly during the war. Best of all, he will do nothing about the tiny clique that has always run our country and made it the "success" it is today.

Saca's winning slogan was "*Un Pais Seguro*" – A Secure Country. For in our libertarian Arena paradise, and a decade and more after the war, we still live in fear of armed gangs and violent crime. Saca's predecessor promised a *mano dura* – heavy hand – to reclaim the streets. Tattoos were banned but the problem remained. So our new leader's bold new idea? *Mano super dura.*

And that's the trouble with democracy. It's all about choice… and ours was between appalling and terrifying. Saca's opponent was Schafik Handal, the septuagenarian Palestinian immigrant, Marxist and former *comandante* who waved the red flag for the FMLN. He's a fiery character, who's shown himself handy with his fists with journalists he doesn't like. He says he was robbed of victory, but even we downtrodden masses had our doubts about a man who still believes every word of *Das Kapital.*

Our gringo friends, of course, were taking no chances. Officially the US said it would respect any result in the elections. Privately it made clear what damage there might be to relations were we to vote an unreconstructed communist into power.

This country's economic "miracle" was achieved on the backs of our immigrant brothers in the US. The money they sent back last year came to 14 percent of our GDP. Even with that money, the economy has grown by, er, 0 percent in the last five years. Just in case no one took the hint, Arena produced TV spots warning that if Schafik were elected, Salvadorans would be thrown out of the US, losing us all that remittance money and swelling the already teeming ranks of the hopelessly unemployed.

With this world offering so little promise, it's no surprise that the biggest growth industry here is religion – and not the traditional Roman Catholicism of our forbears, but fire and brimstone evangelicalism. Roll on the everafter.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "I've heard that there are Western countries where you can go and suck away for all you are worth," Chief Justice Yong Pung How told his appeal court in Singapore, "countries where even people in high places do it. I'm not an expert, although I've read all about it in the papers, and seen what goes in Hollywood movies. But this is Asia, and certain practices are just too repulsive to be tolerated in our culture."

Justice Yong then rejected an appeal by Annis Abdullah, who was protesting against the severity of the two-year prison sentence passed on him for having received consensual oral sex from a woman. "Under Singapore

law, oral sex is defined as an act against the law of nature. It is currently punishable by up to ten years imprisonment, so you should consider yourself lucky to have got off so lightly. This is Asia, and originally the sentence for such behaviour was life imprisonment. It's true that times have changed. Women are freer nowadays, and they don't just run around the kitchen. But ask any mother or your sisters, and they'll tell you that no lady would ever do such a thing. The offence itself is an aggravation. So go and finish your sentence, and when you get out, remember: no more sucking, and no more being sucked." (*The Age, 18/2/04. Spotter: Paul Lloyd)*

– ● –

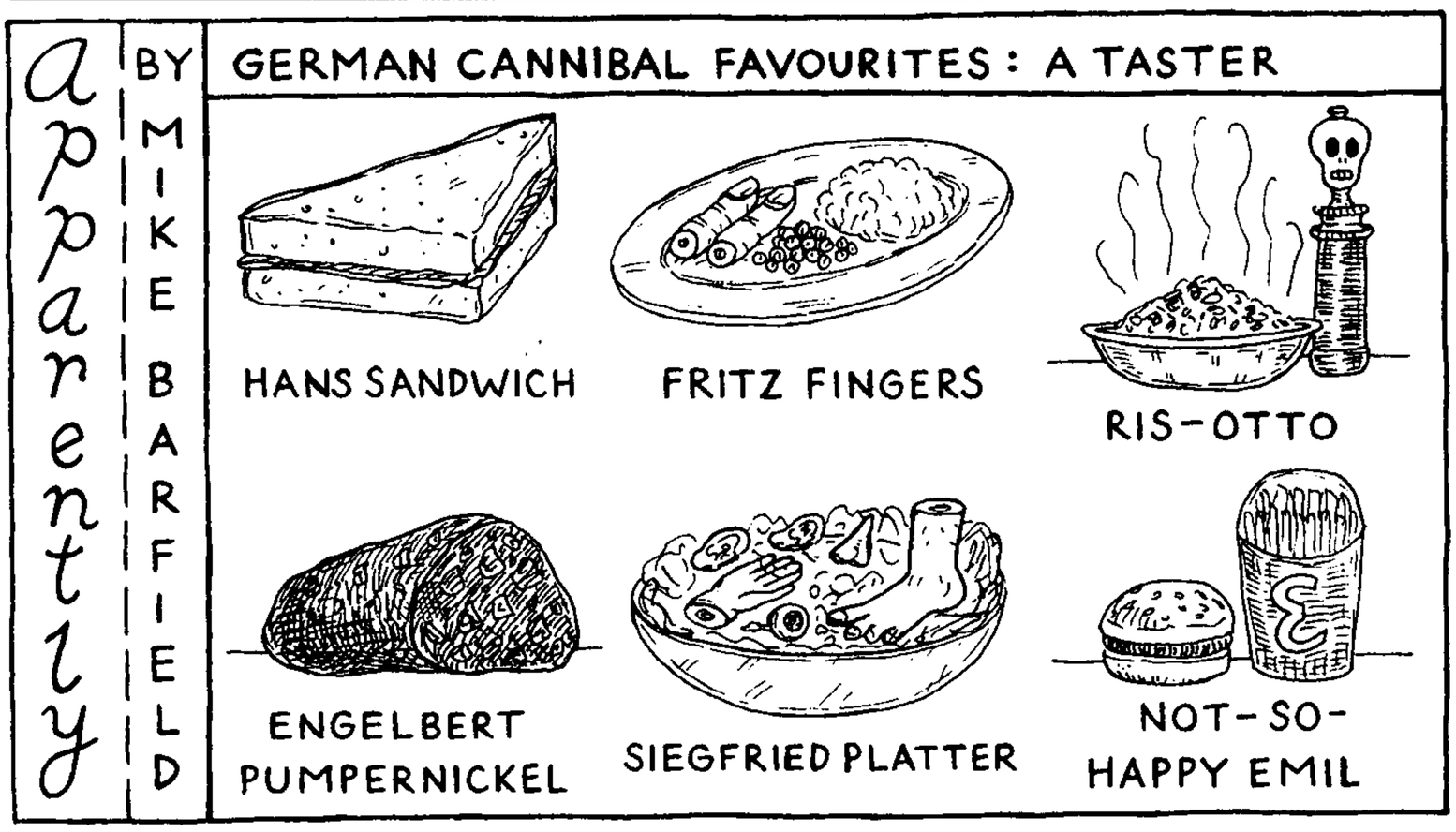
● *"It's just so gross when you find one," Megan Warfield told reporters at the side of a highway in Adams County, Washington state, "and none of our crews ever want to touch them. But we don't want them laying on the side of the road forever, so we have to pick them up, no matter how smelly or leaky they are. It just goes to show that people nowadays are getting more and more out of control."*

Ms Warfield (the litter program coordinator for Washington state Department of Ecology) was referring to the increasing number of plastic bags and milk jugs filled with excrement and urine that are being thrown out of windows by passing motorists. "All of the clean-up crews encounter this problem, which is mostly caused by long-distance truckers who don't want to spend time stopping at rest areas. Between March 4th and November 27th, one highway cleanup crew alone picked up 2,666 jugs of urine and 67 bags of excrement, but they're also finding plenty of dirty diapers and hypodermic needles. We've tried placing full-page ads in local newspapers, with a picture of a plastic milk container and the words 'Okay, one last time – this is not a urinal,' but so far it's had no effect. It's incredible how many you find out here, but we can't just leave them or the freeways would be flooded. Where is it all going to stop?" (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 16/12/03. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)

– ● –

● "It was clear from the rotting state of the corpse that he'd been dead in the bed for some time," a spokesman for the Czech police told reporters in Peckov, "but initially we didn't realise how long. At first, his widow wouldn't speak to us, and we assumed it was a fairly recent death. But eventually she confessed that he'd died a little over two years ago. She said that at first she hadn't wanted to admit it to anyone, not even to herself. So she carried on as though nothing had happened, cooking dinner for him each evening, and sleeping beside him every night. When the smell got worse and worse, she just bunged up her nostrils with cotton wool, and carried on sleeping in the same bed. And she told friends and family that he was bedridden, which was true, I suppose, although it was something of an understatement."

A local resident, Jana Tomaskova, added that she had eventually alerted the police because she thought her sixty-seven-year-old neighbour was acting strangely. "I just think she loved him so much that she couldn't bear to be separated from him." *(Mlada fronta Dnes, 3/2/04. Spotter: Mal Function)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hallo,

Easter is a very sad time, I always think, and never more so than this year, with the tragedy that has befallen my great friend Beverley Hughes.

You all know Bev. A finer servant to the parish it would be harder to imagine, and someone who, in her words, was the "most upright, honest, dedicated and competent member the PCC has ever had".

Nicely put, Bev!

And you ask any of the Romanian families who are camping out in the churchyard what they think of Bev!

They'll be the first to say that they had a real friend in Bev, who did so much to help them!

So why, you're asking, did Bev have to be "sacked"?

Well, hey, I feel a bit like one of the characters in the Easter story, which you've all been seeing in the cinema lately.

I'm talking about that much-maligned hero of the whole story, Pontius Pilate, who had to take some really tough decisions in order to keep the show on the road, and who has since had nothing but abuse from ignorant people who could not see how difficult his job was!

Remember when the mob was howling for Bev's blood, shouting, "Sack her, sack her!"?

It was then that I said that I could find no fault in her. "What has this woman done?" I asked.

"She's told a whole lot of lies!" they shouted. "But apart from that," I shouted down to them, "what else has Bev done?"

And you know, they had no reply! Which is why it is so sad that I had to sack her!

But, like poor old Pontius Pilate, I am "washing my hands" of this one! It's hardly my fault that I had to sack her, so I cannot be held responsible in anyway for her sad departure!

If anyone is to blame, it is probably Mr Blunkett, who runs the Neighbourhood Watch and is meant to be the first to notice when thousands of Romanians move in to live in the churchyard! See below!

I am second to none in my admiration for David, who has done a great job running our Neighbourhood Watch, with his much-loved dog Cerberus.

David has been an outstanding servant of the parish, in his tireless campaign to stamp out dangerous and old-fashioned ideas about "civil liberties", and to ensure that no foreign visitors could set up a campsite in the churchyard!

This is why I have decided to take over the Neighbourhood Watch myself, although of course David will still be very much in charge on a day to day basis!

As for Bev, I don't think we need to feel too sorry for her. One of the central messages of Easter, after all, is that people can come back again!

I am sure this will be as true for Bev as it has been for some of my other "disciples" in this parish – Peter, Stephen, Harriet, Estelle, and Peter again!

So on that note of "resurrection", I think we can now draw a line under anything that Bev or Mr Blunkett may or may not have done, and sing that greatest of all Easter hymns:

"Move on, move on,
With hope in your heart!"

Allelulia!

Tony

Parish Scenes

The Churchyard!!
By Local Artist Mr de la Nougerede

A Message from the Rev. Dubya, Chief Minister of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons

To all my brothers and sisters in Englandland, greetings (and warnings!)

In these last times, as it has been foretold, many shall rise up to bear false witness against me. Snakes and vipers shall crawl from under every stone. And one shall be called Judas Clarke, who will claim that, as the trumpet sounded in the hour of danger, I lay asleep in my tent and allowed the towers of the city to be razed by bin Laden and his gang of badhats and no-good hombres.

But, as Sister Condy has testified under solemn oath before the Church elders, there is no truthitude in the above tissue of false propheticness. I was not asleep. My six-guns were loaded, and ready to blaze away at the Great Satan skulking in his lair in Baghdad like a sick coyote. Yessir, and now another false prophet has arisen in the land, a snake-oil salesman from out East who calls himself Kerry. He *too* says that I was asleep on my watch when bin Laden was riding in.

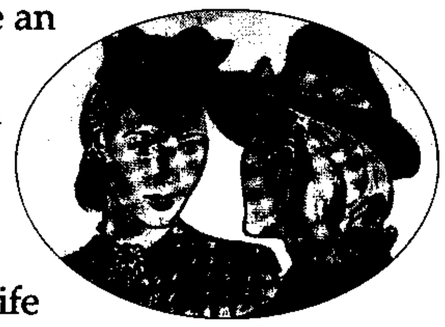
But I say unto Kerry, this town ain't big enough for the both of us. Make your play, Kerry, and eat lead. Then we'll know who's the fastest gun in the West – Marshall Dubya, the Texas ranger, or the smooth-talking carpetbagger Kerry!

Yours in the Lord!
Rev. Dubya

Women's Groups

There was a special emergency meeting of all the parish Women's Groups last Tuesday, to demonstrate sisterly solidarity with Ms Hughes ('Our Bev' as we all know her) after the disgraceful decision by the vicar that she should be sacked from the PCC for telling lies. We all agreed that Bev had done nothing wrong, and even if she had, she is still a woman, which makes the vicar's action unforgivable. Once again this demonstrates that a woman can only get so far in the parish before she hits her head on the "glass ceiling" (or rather gets "hit on the head" by some aggressive member of the male-dominated parish establishment).

After the passing of this resolution, Ms Cherie Booth QC gave a short talk on "Why Women Should not be Sent to Prison and Men Should". She cited an interesting recent case where an Australian immigrant with a criminal record had embarrassed a very famous person and his wife and her friend. "Obviously" she said, "this man, who I cannot name, but let us call him Mr Foster, should be gaoled for life and then deported. Furthermore he compounded his felony by publishing a book in order to make money, a clear infringement of the human rights of the Vicar and his family."



After the talk, Ms Carole Caplin served her own delicious home-made organic hot-cross buns from Sainsbury's. She very graciously declined any fee for the buns, but suggested instead that a token donation of £10 a head would be very welcome. D.H.

BUSH WAR LATEST

by Our Defence Staff **Kate Mosque**

PRESIDENT Bush has today welcomed the news that large areas of Iraq are in the hands of Iraqi militiamen.

"This is exactly what we wanted to happen," he told reporters. "We are handing over control of the country to its own people.

"This is certainly not my Vietnam," he continued, "because I wasn't there either."

Bill The Tortoise – Not Dead

by Phil Two-Pages

THE world's oldest surviving tortoise, Old Bill, was reported to be alive and well and working at the Daily Telegraph.

For the last 160 years, Bill has been sitting in a corner, living on scraps of news, and occasionally coming out of his shell to go to Ethiopia or India. He was a favourite pet of the late Princess Diana who liked to listen to his stories of a bygone age.

● *Do you like stories about tortoises? Let us know your favourite tortoise story and help us fill up the paper. Join the great tortoise debate at www.shellsuit.co.uk*

The World That Bill The Tortoise Has Seen

- **Noah's Ark. Bill was one of the first on board.**
- **Magna Carta. Bill was under the famous table at Runnymede.**
- **Repeal of the Corn Laws. Bill was in the House of Lords, sitting underneath the Woolsack.**
- **Sinking of the Titanic. Bill had to swim all the way home.**
- **Sinking of the Daily Telegraph. Bill laughed as Conrad Black went to jail.**

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S **** *****!!

■ **HATS OFF to Posh Spice!!?! You've gorra be kiddin', mister!?!?! No wonder her handsome hubby has ditched her and gone off a-sexin' and a-textin' the sexy senoritas of Old Madrid!?!? And for why?!?! Because Not-Very-Posh is a whingein' washed-up has-been with fake tits and a facelift!?!? No offence, Victoria, but Aunty Glenda tells it like it is?!?!?!**

■ POSH SPICE!?!? Don'tchajust-hateher?!?!? Of course her bloke's gone out a-stonkin' and a-bonkin' in Sunny Spain, the love capital of the world!?!? What hunky full-blooded central midfielder wants to spend his nights alone whilst his selfish scarecrow of a missus is trying to resurrect her sad solo career five million miles away!?!? Good on yer, Becksy!?! Give Miss Madrid one for Aunty Glenda!?!?! Geddit???!?

■ *POSH SPICE – she had it coming to her!?!?! Wanna know the truth?!?! I hate her. And I'll tell you something else – I hate her even more!!?!?*

■ HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's April Phwoars?!?!?

● **David Beckham** – They think it's all legover!?!? And it is!?!?! Geddit?!?

● **Becks** – Here's a message from Aunty Glenda!? I've got no knickers on!!?!?

● **The England captain** – Come and get your free kicks round my place, Senor Sex?!?! Geddit!?!?! And leave your wife at home because I hate her!!?!? *(See above)*

Adiosssss!!!

BLUNKETY BLUNK

With Your Host David Blunkett!

● **Can you fill in the missing Blunk?**

"There are _____ immigrants coming into Britain every day"

(Real answer: Nobody knows!)

NEW DEFINITIONS With 'Wordsmith'

Ludicrous	True
Fertiliser	Terrorist weapon
Managed migrants	Romanian criminals
Integrity	Lack of same
Railway	Bus
Mission accomplished	Civil war

(To be continued)

Lines Written On The Announcement Of A Possible Rift In The Marriage Of Mr And Mrs David Beckham

BY WILLIAM REES-MCGONAGALL

'Twas in the year two thousand and four
It was reported that the Posh and Becks marriage
might be no more.
There was soon no other topic of conversation
Through every stratum of the British nation.

To all those who said that Becks had been unfaithful
to his Posh,
England's brave captain retorted merely that this
was 'Tosh'.
But, alas for his claims that there was nothing brtween
him and Miss Loos,
A series of text messages appeared in the *News*
of the Screws.
Readers spent their Sunday trying to decipher
the blanks
Where words had been erased, such as c*** and w***s.

Long on their pencils the fans did suck
To establish whether the pair had gone as far as a f***
(That's enough of this filth in a family satirical magazine. Ed.)

Did you find this poem offensive? We would like to hear your views. If you want to join the debate, please send us a text message saying what you would like to do to someone else, such as Sandra in Human Resources.

ON OTHER PAGES: Why am I not allowed to read the above article just because I am only 5? by Peaches Geldof (exclusive to the *Peach Sundae Telegraph*)

Those Disgusting Beckham Text Messages In Full

PRIVATE EYE can now reveal the complete sordid conversation that took place between England's top editor Andy Coulson and former PR girl Rebecca Loos with whom Coulson developed a passionate relationship in Madrid.

AC: I want t**ts! I want t**ts with s*x in them! I'm gagging for it – go on fill up my organ!

RL: Ok, we've got b**king, we've got sh*gging, we've got w**king. Is that good for you?

AC: I'm so excited. I'm jumping around. Do you want me to talk m*n*y to you?

RL: Yeah. I'm feeling really gr**dy. Get out your big ch*q**!

AC: How do you want it?

RL: Straight in my b**k account. I can't wait any longer.

AC: Three hundred gr**d?

RL: I'm f**thy rich!

AC: And I'm just f**thy!

*© N*ws of the Scr*ws*

Loos woman

Rebekah – A Woman Obsessed With Sex

THE shy, retiring "other woman" at the centre of the Beckham row has been described by friends as "a voracious sexaholic determined to bring down a top sportsman".

According to these close friends, Rebekah Wade, the Editor of the *Sun*, is a manipulative and obsessive stalker of celebrities who has long had her eye on Beckham and wants to split up his marriage so that *(cont. p. 94)*

HOW THE FOREIGN PAPERS SAW THE BIGGEST STORY IN THE WORLD

Martian Times

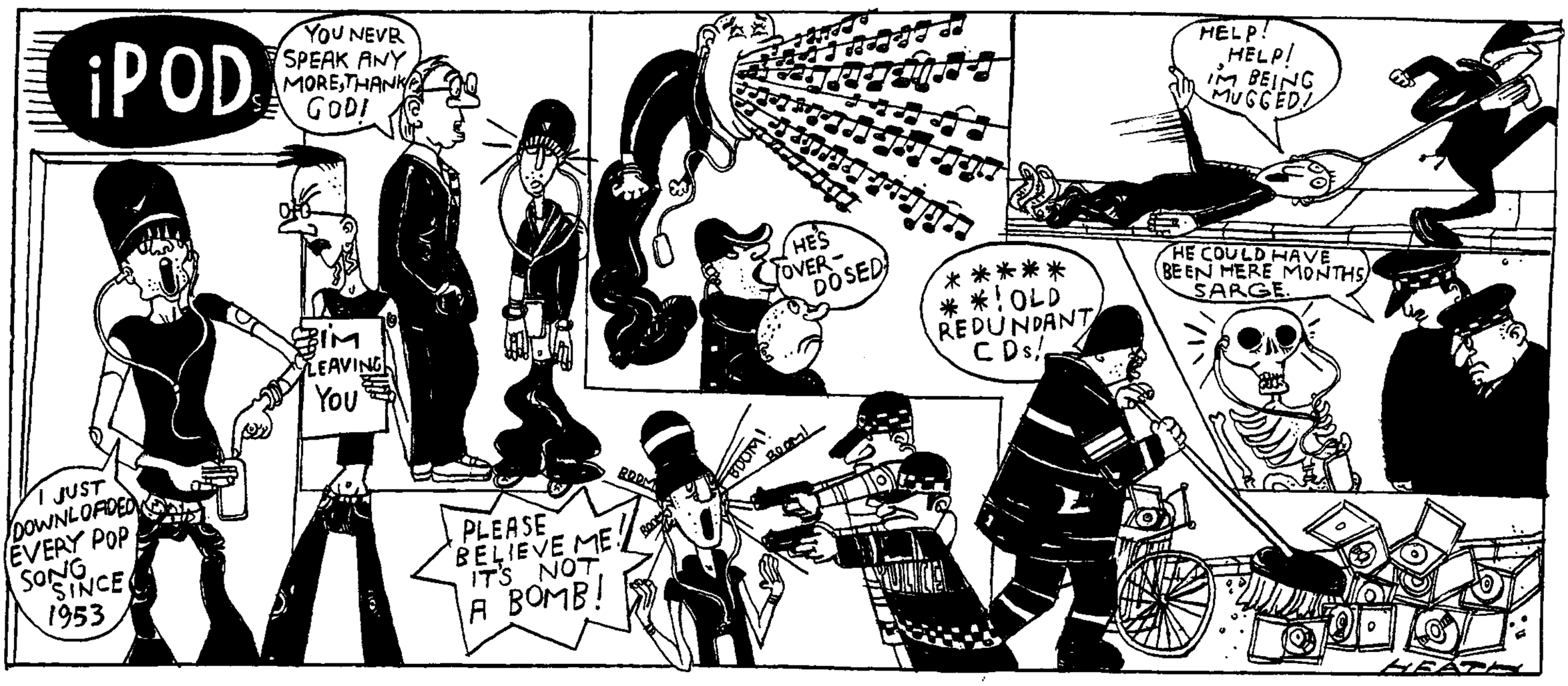
XXRGLL GRZLL XRXXGL BECKS YRRRX POSH BCXY YZGLGK XRGLLG RXXGLL

by XRRRL ZZZLOGZ

POSH aaagll Becks xllzelz xrxxel xrgllg xllrrrg Posh xlllrge aaxllg xxllggr Becks zzrrge.

On Other Zgrllxss

● Xrllziig ● Zzloxccez ● Xynljr ● Arrzxx ● Xzerll ● Iraq.


iPOD
YOU NEVR SPEAK ANY MORE, THANK GOD!
I'M LEAVING YOU
I JUST DOWNLOADED EVERY POP SONG SINCE 1953
PLEASE BELIEVE ME! IT'S NOT A BOMB!
BOOM!
HE'S OVER-DOSED
**** **! OLD REDUNDANT CDs!
HELP! HELP! I'M BEING MUGGED!
HE COULD HAVE BEEN HERE MONTHS SARGE.

GAY MARRIAGE SHOCK

21-YEAR-OLD HAS GIRLFRIEND

by Our Entire Staff **Phil Space**

A 21-year-old student may have a girlfriend, it emerged last night.
Reuters

ON OTHER PAGES • *Girl's Father Owns House* **5** • *Girl Went To School* **6** • *Girl Has A Friend* **8** • *Why Oh Why Won't The Press Leave Prince William Alone?* **94**

BRITISH ARMED FORCES TO BE CLOSED DOWN

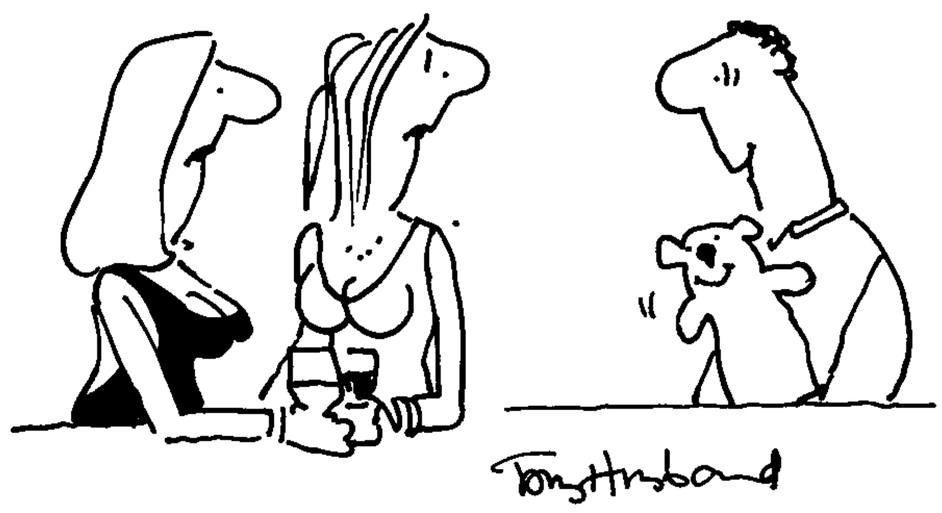
Blair To Take 'Personal Charge'

by Our Defence Staff **Brigadier Trumper-Smythe**

SERVICE chiefs were outraged last night by the government's proposals that the armed forces must be modernised by closing them down completely.

Said the prime minister, "In the 21st Century it really is a bit out of date to have soldiers running around with guns and tanks and that sort of thing. And it is not as though we go to war all the time – only every few months.

"Anyway," Mr Blair went on, "people are getting this all out of proportion. We are merely cutting a few items, such as the army, the navy and the air force."



"Excuse me, girls... would you like to dance with us?"

MPs demand access to intelligence

The Times

Late Media News

CHANNEL 4 says it's amazed at the strong reaction to the announcement that it was to screen an abortion.

"We thought that after sitting through 'Big Brother', 'RI:SE', 'Boys and Girls' and 'Shattered' people would have realised by now our strong ongoing commitment to broadcasting as many abortions as possible," said a Channel 4 *(cont. p. 94)*

TV Highlights

Footballers' Wives

(ITV) Wednesday 10.00pm

SHOCKING episode where the characters realise they can't compete with real life and sit around reading out this week's newspapers to each other.

All New NHS-Approved Tellyskinnies

(BBC) Monday 9.00pm

LAA-LAA, Tinky Winky, Dipsy and Po start their day as usual with a brisk 5km run to the gym where they take part in a vigorous hour-long aerobics workout to tone their abs and six-packs, pausing only for a light breakfast of Tellyskinny 0% fat custard.

NEWQUAY
lodger required to share
cottage
large double bed
f/furn
off street parking
n/smoker pref
£300 pcm
Cornish Guardian

the PREMIERSH*TS
Paul Woor
AND UP STEPS BECKHAM, WAIT - THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH THE WALL...
HOTEL
STOP PUSHING!
PISS OFF, I WAS HERE FIRST!

USTINOV
Tributes Pour In

by Our Showbiz Staff **Lunchtime O'Bit**

FOLLOWING the death of Sir Peter Ustinov, 86, the humanitarian and international diplomat, tributes from admirers flooded in from all over the world.

Among the first was a message from the late Josef Stalin, "Peter was a great friend to Russia, and a great friend to me. His staunch support of everything we had tried to achieve in the Soviet Union was a real comfort in the dark days of the Cold War."

Another admirer, the late Mao-Tse-Tung, said, "Peter was a great friend to the Chinese People's Republic, or at least those left after I'd killed most of them.

"What we in the Politburo particularly remember him for was his marvellous gift for impersonating a trombone – or was it a racing car?"

Others who queued up to pay their respects to the Great Impersonator included former President Milosevic, Saddam Hussein and Mr Osama bin Laden, who said that nothing had inspired him more in his crusade for universal rights than Ustinov's incomparable portrayal of the Emperor Nero in the film *Quo Vadis.*

On Other Pages Was 'Renaissance Man' Ustinov The Greatest Painter Since Leonardo?

"This is neither the time nor the place to release your endorphins, George"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Hubert Gregg, songwriter and broadcaster

So. Farewell
Then Hubert
Gregg.

You died at
The same time
As Peter Ustinov
So nobody
Noticed.

However, you
Wrote "Maybe
It's Because I'm
A Londoner",
One of the world's
Best-known songs.

All together now –
"Maybe it's because
I'm a Londoner
That I love
Glasgow town."

Yes, we all
Remember it
Well.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

If you liked this poem, you can download a selection of E.J. Thribb's verses from www.maybeitsbecauseimapoet.com

Letter From Heaven
by Alistair Cooke

GOOD HEAVENS. I was sitting on my cloud talking to my old friend President Teddy Roosevelt, who asked me if I fancied a game of golf. It was a bright sunny day, as it always is up here, and I'd been told the course, laid out by Leonardo da Vinci, was better than St Andrews, although of course Saint Andrew himself, whom I was speaking to earlier, says he does not believe it. Where was I? Oh yes, in heaven, waiting for my first harp lesson from my very old friend, the late Harpo Marx. But then, up here, we are all of us late

(Continued for eternity)

NEASDEN'S WEMBLEY DREAM COMES TRUE

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The Mini-Cab Sending Dirty Text Messages To The Barmaid In The Boston Arms

"THIS IS a dream come true," wept an ashen-faced Ron Knee, manager of Neasden FC, as he told reporters that his dream had come true.

"Neasden have done it," said the tight-lipped supremo of the relegation-dogged North Circular League club after his team won a place in this year's FA Cup Final against the mighty juggernaut of Manchester United.

Run of the Millwall

"Man U. will have the likes of Nistelrooy, Scholes and Giggs. But we have nothing to fear with players like Wally Foot and Baldy Pevsner with their decades of experience.

"There is only one way to sum up my feelings tonight," Knee told the world's media (the Neasden Advertiser), "and that is that it is a dream come true."

But a searing question mark hangs over the Final – will the Neasden fans (Sid and Doris Bonkers) spoil it for everyone, with their history of hooliganism, mass-hysteria and grievous bodily harm?

Millwally Foot

Said Sid: "When Doris and I head for Wembley, violence and mayhem will not be on our agenda – and anyone who says they are will get their head kicked in."

How The Squirrels will line up at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff, on 22 May

MILLWALL (4-3-3): Foot W. – Pevsner, Ceausescu, Carter-Ruck, Delingpole – Onanugu, Milosevic, Villa-Lobos – Bert O'Relli, Aznavour, Ruud van Dryver.

ON OTHER PAGES: *Ron Knee (world exclusive) on "My Dream Come True".*

the PREMIERSH*TS

Daily Mail

The Paper That Supports Our House Prices

FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 2004

IS JEMIMA'S MARRIAGE OVER?

by Lynda Lee-Beatrix-Potter

THE fairytale marriage between Jemima Puddle-duck, daughter of the late marmite king Sir Jams Puddleduck, and her dashing husband, Mr Imran Fox, seems to be on the rocks.

Jemima has lately been seen in some of the more fashionable parts of the farmyard, squired by such elegant drakes as Mr A.A. Goose. Another beau of the fabulously beautiful Jemima has been Mr Hugh Grunt, the famous pig and star of the film *Notting Swill*.

The Happy Couple

Duckingham Palace

In recent weeks the well-connected heiress has been living at home in a £10-million luxury pond with her mother, Lady Annabel Puddleduck, who is famous for her boobs – such as marrying Sir Jams Puddleduck and writing a book about it.

Meanwhile, Jemima's husband, Mr Fox, is intent on pursuing a political career in his native forest.

Mr Fox has told friends, "These cross-cultural marriages never work. Foxes and ducks just don't go together."

But speaking last night from her mother's riverside home in Richmond, Jemima said, "I am a great admirer of fox culture. We ducks often misunderstand foxes and imagine that they are only after one thing *(cont. p. 94)*

TOP TERRORIST WAS MODEL PUPIL Says Headmaster

by Our Education Staff **John Clare de Loon**

"ST CAKES has never had a more charming and responsible student."

That was the verdict of the £48,000-a-term top independent school's headmaster, R.J. Kipling, when told that the former head boy Iqbal Ahmed Fotherington-Hatterjee had been arrested on charges of plotting to blow up the world.

Alma Martyr

Said Kipling, "Eekie, as we knew him, did very well in his A-levels, achieving 'A Stars' in Chemistry, Biology and Nuclear Studies.

"He also won the A.N. Wilson Scripture Prize for an outstanding essay on 'Why The Infidel West Must Be Destroyed'.

"He was a keen hockey player, turning out for the Second Eleven, and he played the clarinet in the School Orchestra's performance of *Oh What A Lovely Holy War*.

"I cannot believe that Eekie would be involved in anything like blowing up the world, and the news that he was found in possession of a bag of chemical fertiliser has come as a great shock to us all.

"Clearly it was his friend Faisal (Jihad's, 1991-96) who the police should be looking for."

Do you find this article offensive to Britain's ethnic minorities? If so, we'd like to hear from you.

If you wish to join the debate, email your message now to wastepaperbinladen @blowup.uk

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

"Bloody Brits"

IMMIGRATION SUMMIT LATEST

by Our Immigration Correspondent **Enoch Powell**

FOLLOWING the Immigration Summit in London on Wednesday, Tony Blair has said that he'll take personal responsibility to see that unscrupulous individuals such as Michael Howard are not allowed to exploit loopholes in Britain's immigration policy for their own ends.

"I'm making it my top priority to make sure the Tories are not allowed to enter Number 10," the Prime Minister told reporters. "These undesirables aren't welcome and it's my job to make sure the likes of Michael Howard and David Davies are sent packing."

However, the Prime Minister's critics said the Government's mishandling of the immigration issue meant that hundreds of Tories like these could be flooding into the corridors of power in the years to come.

BUCHAREST TELEGRAPH

THE SCANDAL OF THE DISABLED WORKER

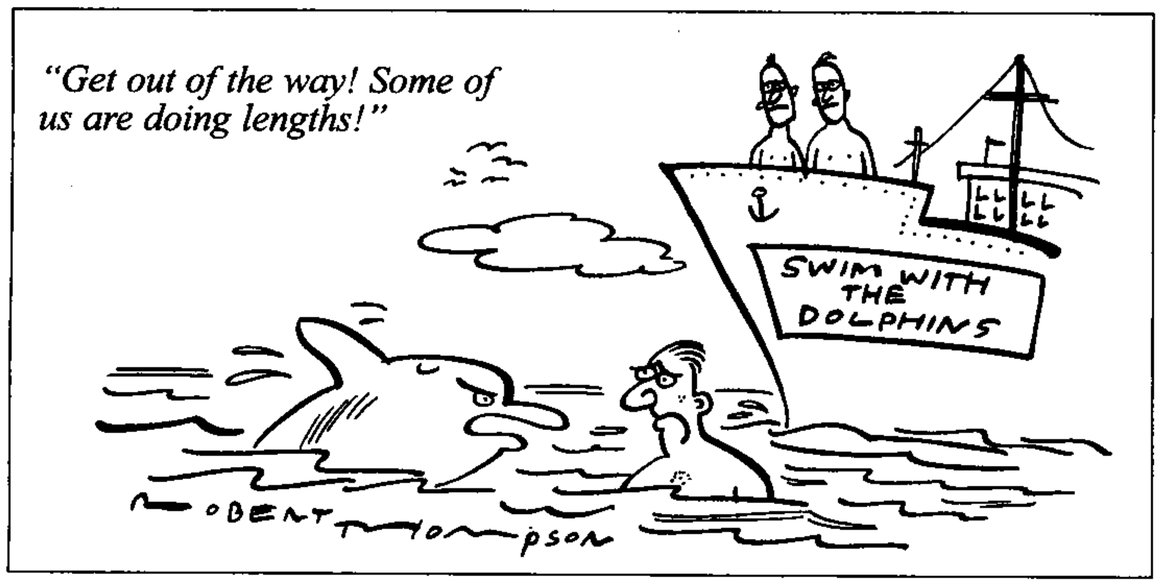
BY OUR ONE-LEGGED MAN IN LONDON RUFUS TYLER

The Romanian authorities were shocked last night to discover that a disabled worker in Britain had been given a top-level job despite the clear evidence of his incapacity.

Mr David Blunkett was admitted into the government seven years ago and has continued to work ever since, even being allowed to oversee immigration policy, despite the fact that he cannot see the thousands of one-legged Romanians pouring into his country to work as roofers and *(cont. p. 94)*

On Other Pages

Your Trains To London Tonight



A Manager Writes

AS a manager, I am often asked, "Manager, where are all the doctors?" The simple answer is, "There aren't any – we've spent all the money on new managers."

What happens is that the National Health Service gets its priorities in a condition known medically as *Rectum supra mammarium* (or *Arse-over-tit*, to give it the colloquial name).

The symptoms include an outbreak of paperwork, a rash of targets and a resultant increase in management which may develop into a more serious build-up of bureaucracy with the inevitable haemorrhaging of money and total collapse of the system.

If you are worried about the increase in NHS bureaucracy, you should complain in triplicate to the Deputy Manager of the Management of Managers Department, The Management Centre, Management House (formerly St Saviour's Hospital, London).

© A. Manager

THE TIMES

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Figures Show That Giving Teenagers Access To Contraception Means They'll Have Sex With One Another

ON OTHER PAGES

Experts say that releasing bears into woodland area increases chances of them defecating there by 100% **page 7**

Researchers suggest that the appointment of a new Pope leads to increase by one in the overall number of Catholic Popes **page 10**

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

LUCIAN FREUD

As the most distinguished living artist in Britain, you have never before consented to give an interview. We are therefore very privileged that you should have granted us this unprecedented opportunity to question you about spoons. May I first ask you, as someone who has painted many of the best-known figures of our time, such as the Duke of Devonshire and Andrew Parker-Bowles, has the depiction of spoons ever become a significant theme in your work?

I take it from your silence that you are not prepared to discuss this point... Could I then put it another way? In your recent portrait of Her Majesty the Queen, you showed only her head. Whereas another artist, say, Sir James Gunn, had no inhibition in showing a full-length study of the Royal Family, sitting round at tea-time, holding cups of tea with spoons in them. Did you consider that a picture of this type was too banal?

OK, can I put it another way? Now that you are 80, do you still manage to shag all these women you paint?

I was going to ask you if anything amusing had ever happened to you in connection with a spoon, but now that you've left the room that seems rather pointless.

NEXT WEEK: Anna Ford – *"Me And My Ford"*

Mr A.D. Egan and Miss C.J. Bacon
The engagement is announced between Andrew, son of Mr and Mrs Malcolm Egan, of Guiseley, West Yorkshire, and Caroline, daughter of Mr and Mrs Rodger Bacon, of Kirribilli, New South Wales, Australia.

Daily Telegraph

DIARY

It's scary, it really is. Abso-fucking-lutely.

Last week, I gave an exclusive interview to *Hello!* magazine. I'm sorry, I'm not going to apologise. I wanted to drag the whole question of Iraq into the political mainstream. I said, we've got to get this one sorted, right? I said, we can't go around killing innocent people, regardless of their sexuality. I said, Bush and Blair have got to do something about all this, they really have.

I was very, very honest and very, very truthful, and very, very courageous.

And you know what was really, really shocking? Not one of the newspapers reported it. Just a silence. A deafening silence. I think they're in serious denial.

Articles about Bush: yes. And Blair: yes. But nothing about George Michael.

Yup. They've effectively silenced the opposition.

And that, my friends, is scary.

It's time someone had the courage to speak out against everything. I am in the fortunate position that simply by opening my mouth like this – AAAARRRR! – I am able to save the lives of literally millions of people. And I don't intend to be silenced.

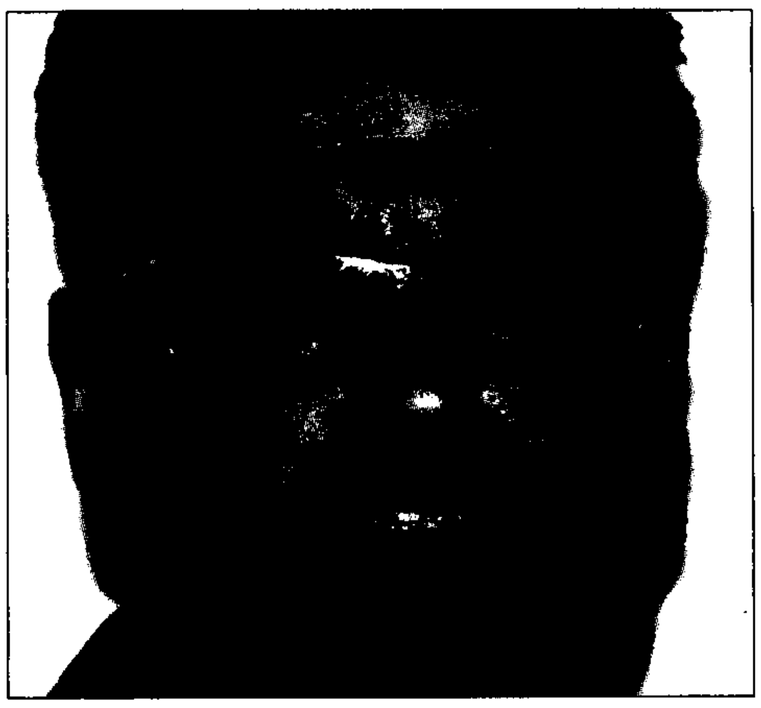
Let's face it – we are at a watershed in world history. And like all watersheds, it's full not only of sheds, but of water too. Yup, this shed is full of water – and we've got to do something. So let's be brutally honest. You can't store all that water in a shed without something dreadful happening. First of all, the water could spill out through the gaps in the walls. Look, I don't pretend to be an expert in watersheds, or how they're constructed. I'm an artist. But what I do know is this. If there's too much water in the shed, then it doesn't matter how many people you've got guarding it, or trying to plug the holes. That shed is going to burst.

And then we'll all get soaking wet.

Our clothes will be ruined. Our hair will go all flat. And there's no point even talking about highlights in a situation like that. It'll all be totally unmanageable.

And that scares the shit out of me.

When 9:11 happened, I was in the middle of writing a major new song. At that moment, a close friend phoned me and he said, you've got to switch on the television, you won't believe it. So I switched on the television and I couldn't believe it. The whole nightmare was so negative.



GEORGE MICHAEL

My first reaction was – someone out there, and I'm not saying I know who it is, but someone out there is trying to distract me from writing my new song.

So I thought to myself, I don't care what happens, they're not going to stop me. I'm a proud man. I'm a determined man. And I'm an honest man. Maybe too honest, 'cos then things can get pretty scary. And you know what? I wasn't going to let them silence me. So despite all that negativity, I finished that song. It was very political, very concerned, very real, very brave – and very outspoken. I called it "9:11".

As you know, its chorus went :

I want sex
And I want it now
Now, now, now, baby -
Not maybe.
But now. Ow! Ow!

And the rest is history. The accompanying video showed me dancing topless with a traffic warden in suspenders. It was the only way I knew of bringing the political debate out into the open, and of putting an end to further bloodshed.

When I see Tony Blair answering questions on television, I can tell by the way he looks that he's still mad at me for sticking up for my principles. He's a decent, charming man but ever since I spoke out against the war he's been looking terrified.

But hey, give it a break, I don't want to fight. I'm a writer, not a fighter. Tony's a guy. And I'm a guy. Two guys who happen to be deeply concerned with the state of the world. Between us, we've gotta put our differences behind us and do what we can to sort out the world's problems.

First off, the whole British transport problem.

Look, roads are fine providing there aren't too many vehicles on them at any one time, because then it gets busy and can lead to a traffic jam. And railways are good, too – but you need trains on them to make them work. What does that leave? Boats. Great for the sea, but you can't get far inland in a boat, not unless you find a river going in your direction. And let's not forget aeroplanes – though a lot of ordinary people can't afford one of their own.

By raising the whole Transport issue in public, I'm sticking my neck on the block. But some things are more important than songs, however beautiful. If I can sort out the way we handle all those cars and lorries and whatever on our roads, then I'm prepared to take the flak. Next week, I re-issue my single *Careless Whispers* with major new lyrics. It asks the big question – what are we going to do when there's no more vehicles left to drive? *Carless Whispers* is out Friday.

I'm an intensely private human being, and so's my longtime partner Kenny.

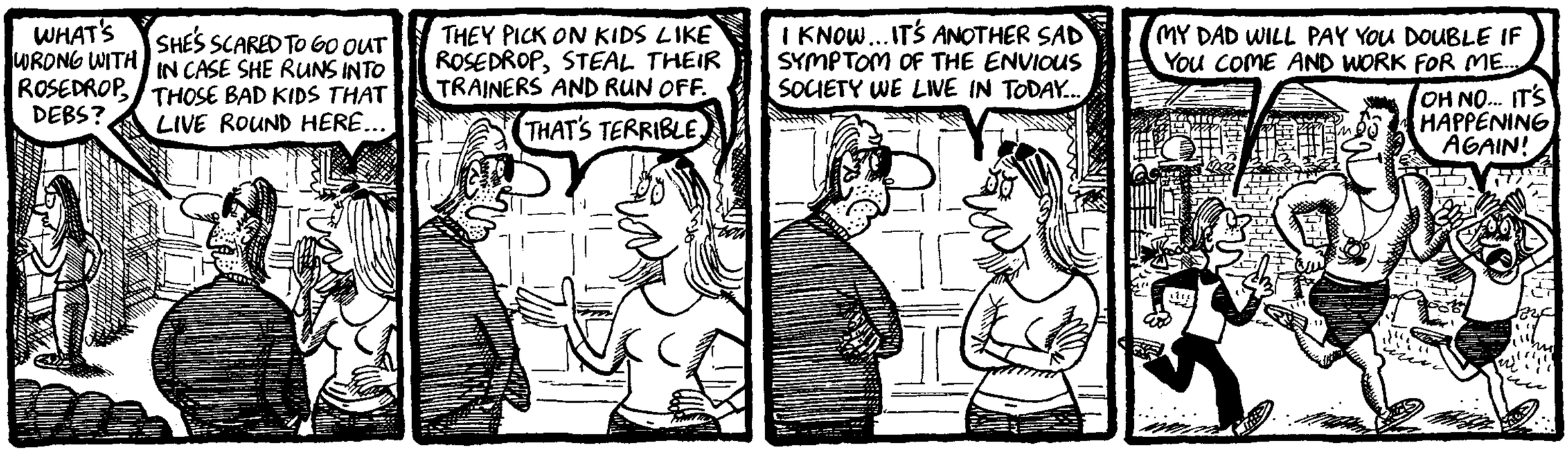
Wherever I go, I'm shocked by the level of negative reaction to my sexuality.

Like, I went through customs at Heathrow the other day, and the customs officer just looked at me as though he didn't want to talk about it. My sexuality's not something I'm ashamed of. Why should I be? If people want to make an issue of it, let them. I've already helped save the Iraqi people, and I don't intend to abandon the fight now.

But sometimes the silence can be deafening. These days, the absence of publicity can be horribly intrusive. Fact – I looked through each one of the Sunday so-called newspapers at the weekend, and there wasn't a single mention of my sexuality – even though my current single is already number 37 in the charts. No pictures of me – even though I totally restyled my hair three days ago.

No pictures of Kenny in his new trousers. And no pictures of any one of the many friendly, caring guys with whom I enjoy occasional sexual relations while pursuing a monogamous relationship with Kenny based on total honesty. So much for a free society! These days, the control the government has over the media is so phenomenal. And not just phenomenal. It's scary.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN


WHAT'S WRONG WITH ROSEDROP, DEBS?
SHE'S SCARED TO GO OUT IN CASE SHE RUNS INTO THOSE BAD KIDS THAT LIVE ROUND HERE...
THEY PICK ON KIDS LIKE ROSEDROP, STEAL THEIR TRAINERS AND RUN OFF.
THAT'S TERRIBLE.
I KNOW... IT'S ANOTHER SAD SYMPTOM OF THE ENVIOUS SOCIETY WE LIVE IN TODAY...
MY DAD WILL PAY YOU DOUBLE IF YOU COME AND WORK FOR ME...
OH NO... IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN!

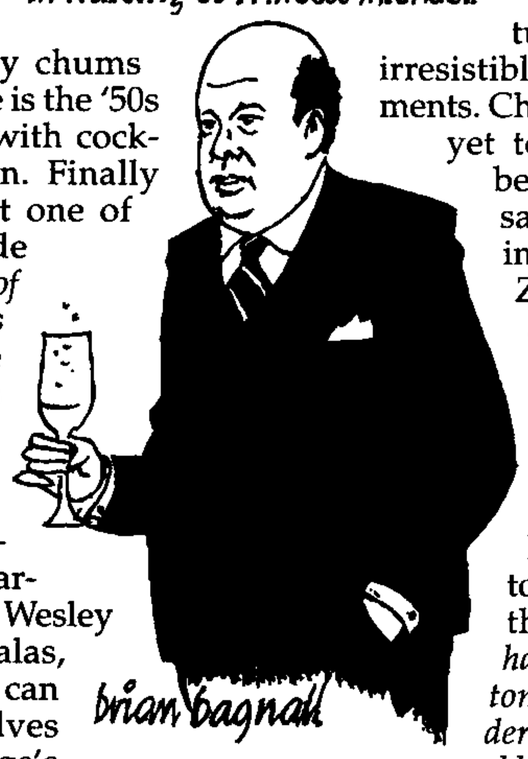
Literary Review

Fellowes Traveller

Snobs: A Novel
Julian Fellowes
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.99)

GAARSH, darlings, all this is simply heavenly is it not? For a start there is the picture of the author – *Gosford Park* behind him, revamped *Vanity Fair* to come – staring fruitily from the back jacket.

Then there is the puff from Stephen Fry ("A delicious thoroughbred delight", etc), possibly the 200th encomium our man has knocked out for one of his writerly chums this century. Then there is the '50s Dior-style posh babe with cocktail glass cover design. Finally there is the title – not one of those higher-grade clichés like *A Marriage of Inconvenience* or *Class Distinction*, but the one-word, ponderous thump of *Snobs*.



The English toff novel comes around as regularly as the ministerial resignation or carols from King's. Mary Wesley is no longer with us, alas, but her legion of fans can still console themselves with Nicholas Coleridge's sprightly homilies on how to eat asparagus. *Snobs*, which falls into this category as neatly as the Marchioness of Auld Reekie slides into her bespoke galoshes, is the affecting tale of middle-class twentysomething Edith Lavery (Daddy an accountant, Jewish origins well concealed) who hooks up with a prawnish scion of the aristocracy called Charles (Earl) Broughton. Mummy (Lady Uckfield to you) spots her for a gold-digger, machinations ensue, and the whole thing is as plausible as the present government's education policy.

And yet Mr Fellowes' guide to upper-class manners is not without all forensic interest, if only for its proud trumpeting of each of the distinguishing marks to which the genre is subject. It is so thoroughly representative of toff fiction, in fact, it rapidly loses its moorings altogether and turns into a fantasy skit on the world of titled young baboons and their fine-boned female table decorations.

Oddly enough the work is narrated by an all too observant actor ("moves comfortably among the upper classes while chronicling their foibles" as the blurb will have it). His characteristics are a) an irrepressible urge to turn everything into a snob gazetteer; b) a fatal inability to avoid using a French word where an English one will do; and c) an unshakeable tendency to lay down the law on what makes these well-bred dimwits tick.

Alas, overkill turns out to be irresistible in all departments. Chas and Edie have yet to be introduced before our impresario is delving into his Sloane A-Z. By page 5 alone, Walton Street, Brooks's, Annabel's, Debrett, Roddy Llewellyn and Eton have been loudly admitted to the party. As for the lingo, it's all *haute bourgeoisie, ton, ancien riches, dernier cri, noblesse oblige, haute couture, belle époque, au fond* and, er, *plusieurs autres* whose cumulative effect is a just a tad *de trop*.

After which – the engagement is announced at a posh dinner at Broughton Hall – it all gets wonderfully lapidary. "The English, of all classes. . . are addicted to exclusivity." They are? "It is a popular fiction that there is a great difference in manners between the upper-middle and upper classes." It is? "It is rare to find an aristocrat who is happier in London – at least, it is rare to find one who admits it." Do you know, shame on me, *I never knew this?*

Then there are those delicious little fragments of insider information, scraps lately fallen from the overstrewn ducal platter – Edith, for example, remembering an old boyfriend who squired her to Henley, "imagining, rather touchingly, that it was a smart event". Corks! Did I buy that blazer for nothing? Ultimately, the bejewelled oar stuck into the marital proceedings by her ladyship is withdrawn, but not before Edith gets it on with a personable actor when a TV company turns up at the Hall to make a period drama (this enables Fellowes not only to demonstrate even more professional *nous* but to abstract a scene from *Vile Bodies* and gesture at *Gosford Park*, which features a visiting Hollywood mogul and his actor boyfriend). Reconciliation and tiny footsteps follow, although – lawks! – the tiny footsteps don't seem to belong to Charles. Is Edith happy? Don't let me spoil this rich mystery for you.

As for the promise of the title, Fellowes, like practically everyone else, ignores the fact that snobbery is not the exclusive province of the titled layabout. Thackeray defined a snob as one who "meanly admires mean things", which might be expanded to mean "one who judges by arbitrary criteria" (ie "I went to Eton so I'm better than you") – a universal failing, in other words. Arguably snobbery as practised on a council estate or a suburban golf course is far more interesting than Batemanesque snorts about who passed the port in the wrong direction.

Books & Bookmen

■ IN *Conspicuous Compassion*, a short book published recently by the think-tank Civitas, Patrick West argued that we live in an age of "recreational grief" and "hollow expressions of public caring". He added that this ostentatious emoting was seen at its most ghoulish after the death of Princess Diana.

A piece about West's book in the *Daily Telegraph* predicted that it would offend Diana-worshippers, and so it has come to pass. The *Telegraph* article has caught the eye of Mohamed Fayed, prompting a fuggin' furious letter to the author.

"Your work is nothing short of a disgrace," Fayed declares. Although he notes that the Civitas think-tank is a registered charity, "I suspect that your main backers will be certain establishment elements – no doubt linked to the renegade security services – whose purpose is subtly to undermine the values which so many of the citizens of this country hold dear."

The conspiracy theory has scarcely begun. "I am sure it is significant that two of your senior fellows, Stephen Pollard and Julia Magnet, write or wrote for the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Daily Telegraph* and that the review of your pamphlet appeared in the *Telegraph*. It is these two establishment newspapers which have led a campaign of lies, smears and vilification against me... The connections of the *Sunday Telegraph* editor, Dominic Lawson, with MI6 are well known..."

And so he raves, for two long pages, about the plot to conceal the truth that Diana and Dodi were murdered by the British secret services – a plot to which West himself is now apparently an accomplice, on the grounds that the *Telegraph* noticed his book.

Does the Phoney Pharaoh know that similar articles about the book also appeared in the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror* – the two most credulously pro-Fayed papers in the Street of Shame? And will he deduce from this that even his dear friends Richard "Dirty" Desmond and Piers "Morgan" Moron are working for the "renegade security services"? Let us hope so.

■ SO FAREWELL then, Politico's. The Westminster political bookshop, a popular venue for political book launches, has closed its doors on Artillery Row and is moving its operation online.

Owner Ian Dale, recently selected as Tory candidate for North Norfolk, vigorously denies the suggestion of Labour MP Austin Mitchell and others that closure was a stipulation of the selection panel.

"The price of political advancement shouldn't be a big let down for all of us who've supported Politico's over the years," wrote Mitchell in his diary column in Westminster magazine *The House*.

In response Dale replied: "Life must be interesting on Planet Mitchell if he really thinks that's the way things operate."

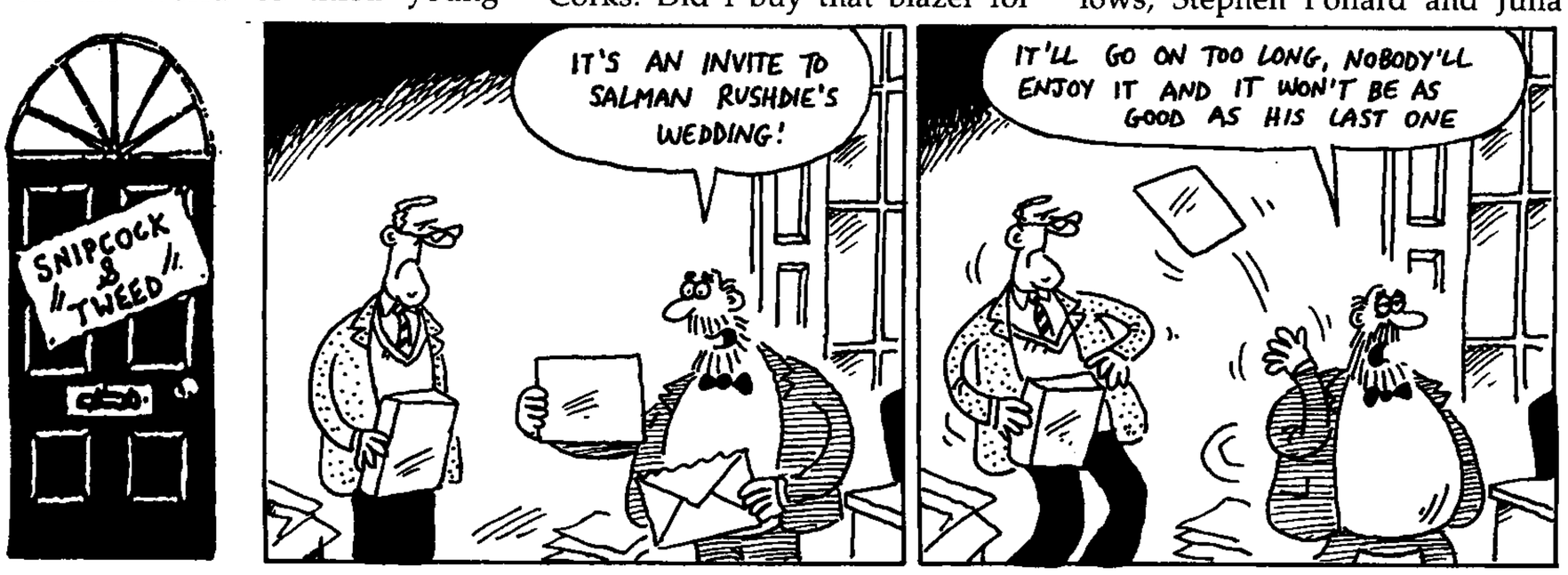
Dale managed a few parting shots at political targets, blaming London mayor Ken Livingstone's congestion charge, Gordon Brown's tax hikes and terrorists for the shop's demise. He's obviously serious about a career in politics.

■ A DAMIEN Hirst picture in a charity colouring book, which sparked a plagiarism row (see *Eye* 1086), was *not* on sale at auction with the rest of the book's original art works.

"Colour It!", featuring modern British artists, was published in the *Guardian* as a supplement for Children's Art Day, while copies were also sent to UNICEF projects worldwide. However, mathematician Robert Dixon complained that Hirst's pattern of circles was identical to one he had used in the *Penguin Dictionary of Curious and Interesting Geometry* years earlier, saying it was impossible that Hirst had hit on the same pattern (a Fermat spiral Fibonacci phyllotaxis) by chance.

Mr Dixon has still not received any apology. However, when the drawings were auctioned at Sotheby's last month, the Hirst drawing had been replaced by a different pattern of hand drawn circles.

'Bookworm'


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
IT'S AN INVITE TO SALMAN RUSHDIE'S WEDDING!
IT'LL GO ON TOO LONG, NOBODY'LL ENJOY IT AND IT WON'T BE AS GOOD AS HIS LAST ONE

Grot sets in

Brass
Helen Walsh
(Canongate, £9.99)

BEING labelled "the female Irvine Welsh" is a little bit like being labelled "the male Margaret Thatcher" – it's an incisive thumbnail sketch, but it's not necessarily a compliment.

True, 26-year-old first-time novelist Helen Walsh does share many of the traits of her Scottish near-namesake: she likes cities, sees beauty in a world of squalor and implies that grot, drugs and tawdry sex are not just options but necessities. But what Walsh has learnt most from Welsh is just how much self-publicity can add to humdrum writing. Never mind the prose, feel the cover blurb.

Accordingly, in the run-up to the launch of *Brass*, she has done a photoshoot in a men's mag; she has written explicit confessionals for the left-leaning press; and from the profiles, interviews and puffs a carefully-honed biography has emerged. Walsh was born in Warrington and moved to Barcelona when she was 16, working as a "fixer", fitting up prostitutes with prospective customers.

She has also done plenty of drugs and is happy to talk about it (she had her first pill before she had her first period is the soundbite). She is a lesbian and is perfectly prepared to deliver the risqué headline as required ("I bet Mo Mowlam's a bit of a goer"). In short she is Little Miss Messed-Up, a user and an abuser, a post-feminist firebrand and someone to be fancied by anyone who wants a bit of the other.

Little Miss Messed-up is, of course, perfect fodder for the kind of middle-class literati who like nothing more than to dip their big toes into the cesspool of ordinary folk before retreating back to their Hampstead mansion to talk about it over cous-cous. The idea behind a book like *Brass*, much as with Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* or other chunks of readymade outrage, is to make the vicarious thrill of smut palatable by dressing it in the garb of art. When framed in these terms, we can all enjoy aggressive sex, lesbian trysts, prostitution, pills and vodka by calling it brutal poetry, rather than grot.

And so to the book. Though it's ostensibly a two-hander, sharing narrative duties between the anti-heroine Millie and her friend Jamie, it soon becomes apparent that the author's interest lies with Millie. And no wonder, because Millie, too, is another Little Miss Messed-up and there is no easier option for a first-time novelist than to give us a cipher of themselves.

The novel is set in Liverpool and opens with Millie having sex with a pubescent prostitute on a gravestone. What follows is a sort of taboo tick-sheet – lesbian sex, idle prostitution (hence the title) and drugs from every corner of the periodic table go to make up a prolonged 300-page bender where, as in most benders, very little of interest to anyone else takes place.

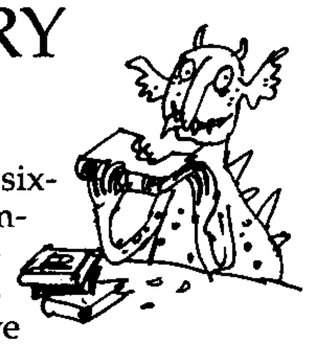
It is, of course, meant to be more of a character study than a sturdy plotter; but the fact remains that wasted youth and decadent degradation has been done quite a lot before – most recently by Emma Forrest last year in *Thin Skin*, but also by a certain Irvine Welsh.

What Walsh brings to the party is the frisson of the confessional. With writing that is grounded in moribund cadences and simple verbal tics, for the reader to retain any interest there needs to be a possibility that all of this happened. And that brings us back round to the publicity: in this instance, knowing the story of the author is essential to the efficacy of the book she has written. Helen Walsh and *Brass* are, therefore, a peculiarly modern example of literature as a complete media meal, in which the novel itself is only a side-order to go with generous servings of press release, favourable review and gushing profile.

FIRST DRAFTS

Samuel Beckett

LIBRARY NEWS



■ AFTER a six-month campaign, including thousands of yellow "Save Hove Library" posters in windows, residents have seen off their local council's plan to turf the library out of its magnificent, grade-II listed, naturally-lit Carnegie building and bung it in a dark room at an unwelcoming and ailing 1970s bunker, aka the town hall.

Brighton and Hove council had said it had no plans for another use for the splendid library building, and deputy leader Sue John insisted it would be "illegal" to keep it open beyond the summer in view of the forthcoming disability discrimination act which it could "never" meet – even though plans for a lift had been agreed more than two years ago.

Meanwhile the council is only now surveying its other 450 properties to see if they meet the provisions of the act. Will all these have to be closed down by the summer? Perhaps Skidrow-on-Sea's best chance of balancing its budget is by shutting down the entire city.

PROOF NEGATIVE

An occasional series on the ever-increasing number of factual errors in books. . .

"When I thought of the unbelievably famous performers who had been our guests... Matt Busby, who was one of our greatest singers..."

This comes from *Is It That Time Already?*, the autobiography of the great Scottish comedian Rikki Fulton, published in 2000 by Black and White Publishing, and reissued last year. Could Fulton possibly be confusing the vocal ability of the late, great Manchester United manager for that of ex-bus driver Matt Monro?

Meanwhile in *Adventures of a Suburban Boy*, the autobiography of film director John Boorman, former athlete/newscaster/MP Chris Chataway becomes "Chris Chatterway", while both Boorman and proofreaders at publisher Faber seem happy to suggest that the River Wye runs through Tewkesbury. The only rivers to touch Tewkesbury are the Severn and Avon (including its tributary the Isbourne), which meet just to the west of the town.

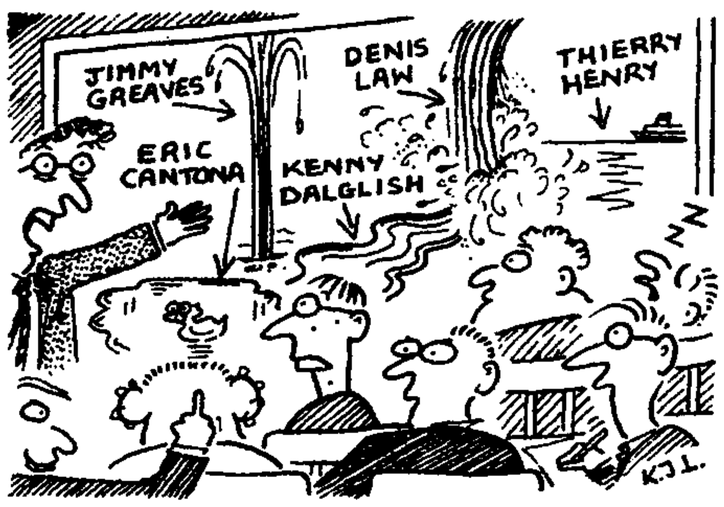
Pseuds Corner

I was a blind man in a vast art gallery thronged entirely with seeing eye critics...The air was charged, and not merely with the full turbo masculinity that had hitherto accelerated the waning of my interest...Wenger glanced at him [Ranieri] from time to time like a concerned uncle, or perhaps a Zen master...The green of the pitch, the physique of the players, the rise and sob and yelp of the crowd. The subs and officials around the managers like minor Mafiosi jostling around the capo di tutti capi...banally, Thierry Henry stopped a ball going out of play. But the way he did it, the style with which he stopped, than captured, then redeployed the ball, made me gasp... I had achieved de-evolution, the merging of the individual into the ecstatic mass.

TIM LOTT watches Chelsea play Arsenal, *Independent*

At the fence he [Best Mate] had no rhythm to his stride. Wise-headed Culloty let him 'pop' it, and then reached and reeled at the reins as he gathered the half ton of athlete beneath him and demanded one final lung-testing slog up the hill. This was no time for sentimental anthropomorphism. Culloty's long Killarney accountant's nose was the avenging beak of an eagle *[continues]*

BROUGH SCOTT watches the Cheltenham Gold Cup, *Sunday Telegraph*



Imagine footballers in the form of water (and why not? It's the one element that flows through our daily lives) and what do you see? Kenny Dalglish as a river, perhaps, a majestic, teeming river, like the Rhine, sweeping past the Lorelei; Eric Cantona as a lake, sparkling like a million diamonds when the sun dances upon the waves but also reflecting the darker moods of a troubled sky. Denis Law was a waterfall, Jimmy Greaves a geyser... Thierry Henry is an ocean.

MICHAEL HENDERSON, *Evening Standard*

This year's theme is a construction of a fissure in which the theme can begin. We are carving out a space in which air can be viewed and views can be aired. It is time to lose the battle for identity and unfold our tongues before the flows. London lends its geography to a Europe within Europe, a liminal transtopia where 'bright young things' share their fears with 'dirty pretty things', an island of multiple tunnels and variable bridges which whispers words of worry with the world's contintents... *[continues]*

Call for papers for the 'Critical Legal Conference' 2004, University of Westminster

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CONTRIBUTORS: Nick Williams, Richard Plowden, George Prest, Patricia Leopold

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

REBUILDING IRAQ

Mercenary motives

DESPITE the growing unrest, the British government still seems keen on the use of mercenaries in Iraq.

Brian Wilson, Tony Blair's special representative on trade and reconstruction in the country, is scheduled to give the opening address at a London conference later this month called "Iraq Procurement 2004 – Meet the Buyers". While oil firms like Chevron, Shell and Exxon are among the "gold" sponsors of the event, prominent among the "silver" sponsors is the biggest mercenary firm in Iraq, Erinys.

The British government is enthusiastic about Erinys, which has 14,000 armed staff in Iraq, mostly locals. Last year trade and industry secretary Patricia Hewitt told parliament Erinys was one of the UK firms which had won contracts in reconstruction – specifically a multimillion pound deal from the coalition provisional authority (CPA) to guard oilfields.

ERINYS INTERNATIONAL

Like Blackwater Security, whose ex-forces staff were brutally killed in Falluja, Erinys has suffered fatalities. Former US marine Jim Wilshire was shot dead when his car was ambushed near Baghdad last November; and in January two South Africans working for Erinys suffered a bomb attack at their hotel.

The naming of the South Africans caused concern about the records of some of the firm's staff in the apartheid era. Deon Gouws, who was injured, was a former member of Valkplaas, a notorious "hit squad" implicated in many murders. South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission granted him amnesty after he admitted involvement in more than 40 petrol bombings of political activists' homes. Gouws also confessed to involvement in the 1986 fatal car-bombing of ANC activist Piet Ntuli, and an arson attack on anti-apartheid activist Fabian Ribero in the same year. Ribero was shot dead later in 1986.

Francois Styrdom, who died in the Iraq blast, was a former member of Koevoet, a South African counter insurgency unit in Namibia (the name means "crowbar" in Afrikaans) with a reputation for murder and torture.

Erinys told the *Eye* that it "could not confirm or deny the records of these men" who were hired from a subcontractor. The spokesman said: "We do as much as we possibly can to check the records of our men and ask them to sign an affidavit stating they have not been convicted of any crime or belonged to an illegal paramilitary group." But the spokesman accepted the system may have failed in this case.

Erinys firmly rejected the label "private military contractor". "We are a security firm involved in guarding. We are not into creating military solutions."

While the deaths suffered by mercenary firms are known, there is no record of the number of Iraqis killed by private contractors. The US military did suggest that the four Iraqis – including a seven-year-old boy – shot dead in a taxi near Tikrit in January may have been victims of private security staff.

Erinys has caused concern by hiring many members of the "Free Iraqi Forces", the militia belonging to Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress. Erinys works in partnership with Nour, a firm closely associated with Chalabi. This has led to fears that Erinys is forming a private army linked to Chalabi, a charge denied by both parties.

PRISONS

Full to bursting

HOW long before Tony Blair is forced to "take control" of prisons and hold an emergency jail summit as he has with immigration?

Since the new year the prison population has been rocketing up by 1,000 a month to reach last week's dizzying high of 75,411. This left only 26 spare places in the entire system. If the courts continue to jail offenders at the same rate, the government's projected maximum jail capacity for 2006 – which allows for an extra 3,263 inmates – will be reached in just three months' time.

The projected extra capacity will be provided by two new jails at Ashford and Peterborough which should be completed later this year, and by expansion of existing prisons. But there is no money nor any plans for any more; and like the immigration fiasco, the figures don't add up.

Moreover, the *Eye* has learnt that prison governors, in their desperation to free up cells, have been instructed to allow out as many inmates as possible on home curfew tags. More "lifers" are also expected to be put forward for release on life licences. Normally governors have to be satisfied that a prisoner offers little risk of reoffending or committing acts of violence and intimidation before being tagged. Now governors have been told to weigh up only whether inmates pose a risk of committing violence.

At the moment, around 1,600 offenders are let out on a tag each month. About 300 go back to jail for breaching the terms of their curfew, about 50 of them for reoffending. With the new instruction, hundreds more are expected to be released in the next couple of weeks. As Napo, the probation officers' union, says, less risk assessment means that many prisoners will simply end up going straight back to jail. Napo's Harry Fletcher said: "It is a panic measure, brought about by Labour's failure over the last seven years to promote community penalties."

Labour is at last talking about community penalties, with home secretary David Blunkett and Martin Narey, head of the national offender management service (Noms), urging courts to reserve prison for only the most dangerous offenders and not for shoplifters or petty thieves. The trouble is that under Tony Blair Labour has presided over a 15,500 increase in prison numbers and has constantly talked up crime and launched crackdown after crackdown. This has inevitably led to harsher sentences across the board. And the resulting overcrowding in jails has led to increased suicide, self-harm and assaults on inmates and staff.

NATURAL GAS

East is feast

Cedric Brown

WHATEVER happened to the original "fat cat", Cedric Brown, the man whose 75 percent pay rise in 1995 as chief executive of the privatised British Gas caused so much public disgust?

Brown is still in gas and has just been made chairman of Eural Trans Gas (ETG), the Hungarian firm that has faced so much criticism over its deals and backers. No doubt his appointment will do much to boost the company's respectability.

Brown is not the only big name working with Eural Trans Gas. British oil firm JKX signed lucrative contracts with ETG last year, and this year became a part-owner of the firm. JKX directors include former Tory trade minister Lord Fraser and Viscount Asquith. Bell Pottinger, the well-connected PR firm, represents ETG. They all like ETG, it seems, because it has some very lucrative contracts to export natural gas out of Turkmenistan.

These concessions to pump gas are very valuable, allowing the firm to buy cheap gas in the east and then sell it for much more in western Europe, earning ETG a handy $2bn. ETG was given the gas concessions by Gazprom – a gift that Gazprom investors find quite inexplicable.

Vadim Kleiner, director of research at Hermitage Capital Management, which is part of the HSBC group and an investor in Gazprom, is deeply suspicious of Eural Trans Gas. He said: "This company is getting money which Gazprom should get itself. Handing over the Turkmen gas deal to ETG was wrong because there is no reason for Gazprom allowing anyone else to take this business." Mr Kleiner added: "We believe this business should be taken back to Gazprom and all the profits should be added to its bottom line."

Suspicions that ETG is in some way shady increased when investigative journalist Paul Radu, of the Romanian *Jurnalul National*, visited the registered owners last year. He found three not very businesslike Romanians living "in a pretty bad financial situation" who turned out to own this multi-billion dollar firm.

The owners included a nurse and her boyfriend who lived together in her mother's flat. The nurse, Anca Negreanu, said an actress friend, Louise Lukacs, had talked her in to setting up the firm. Lukacs in turn told the Romanian reporter that she had been persuaded to set up the firm by a lawyer friend… and then complained she was having trouble paying her phone bill.

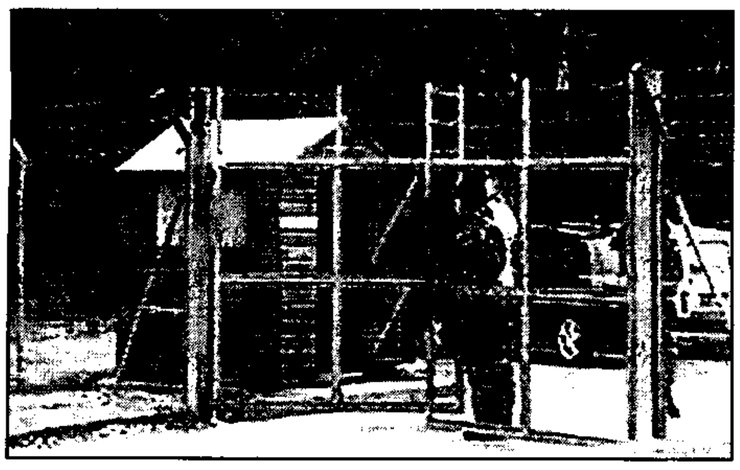
All this made ETG look like some kind of "front" operation. But more serious businesspeople were involved too. These included the firm's fourth owner, Zeev Gordon, and the chairman, Andras Knopp. Knopp was Hungary's minister of culture in the communist years, but has since turned himself into a go-ahead capitalist. (He was also vice-chairman of Reemstma, a German tobacco firm, which last July saw several of its executives resign after a police investigation into smuggling. No charges were made.)

ETG denies there is anything shady about its business or that it is a device to siphon profits out of Gazprom. It clearly sees Cedric Brown as a badge of respectability. Indeed, Knopp welcomed the "well known and well respected figure such as Cedric Brown" to ETG. Brown himself promised he would "aim to achieve the highest standards of transparency". Despite claims of transparency, Bell Pottinger has not returned any of *Private Eye*'s many phone calls about the firm.

Meanwhile, Brown's recent business record does not inspire confidence. He became ETG's boss when his firm, Atlantic Caspian Resources, bought ETG. Atlantic Caspian had been set up to find oil in Kazakhstan, an oil-rich country, but somehow it failed to find any and lost £41.8m. Atlantic Caspian effectively went bust; and in the reorganisation that culminated in the purchase of ETG, Atlantic shareholders made big losses. Their ownership of the new firm is very diluted, and an action group of angry investors is as suspicious of the deal as some Gazprom investors.

A representative for ETG's other new owner, JKX, did speak to the *Eye*, saying that while there were some "shady characters" around, JKX was very respectable and "would not associate with" a company unless "due diligence" showed it to be above board. So that's all right, then.

DEEPCUT DEATHS



No changing the guard

THE Surrey police report into the four deaths by shooting of young recruits at the Royal Logistics trainee depot at Deepcut barracks does not even consider the possibility that any of the deaths could have been murder or even an accidental shooting by another person. The report focuses almost exclusively on the dangers arising from loneliness and boredom for young army recruits.

One issue that consistently stands out is armed guard duty. All four young people – three male, one female – died while apparently on such duty. The report of the deputy adjutant general (DAG) in December 2002 found that "the frequency with which trainees experienced guard duty and the quality of supervision of guards at Deepcut" created the circumstances of isolation and bullying which could lead to self-harm. The DAG concluded, according to the police, that "the guarding regime at Deepcut inadvertently created an extraordinarily high level of opportunity risk".

These references to guard duty prompted Kevin McNamara, Labour MP for Hull North, to ask the defence secretary "how many hours per week on average each Royal Logistics Corps trainee at Deepcut barracks was required to perform guard duty in the last year for which figures are available".

The written reply came from Adam Ingram, armed forces minister: "Detailed information on this is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, in line with individual training programmes each soldier undergoing phase two training at the Princess Royal Barracks Deepcut can expect to spend on average 84 hours a week on guard duty."

Eighty-four hours a week! That's 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Mr McNamara's staff didn't believe it, so they checked the figure with the minister's office and it was confirmed. The *Eye* checked it again with the MoD which confirmed that the 84 hours applied to only one week in the training course.

If young people under 18 in their second phase of training are expected to spend 12 hours a day every day in a week on guard duty, no wonder they are inclined to shoot themselves (and perhaps their colleagues as well).

Pipe dream

FOREIGN office minister Mike O'Brien cannot be looking forward to his appearance next month before the Commons trade and industry committee.

Under discussion will be the backing given by the export credit guarantee department (ECGD) for construction of an oil pipeline from Baku and Tbilisi in Georgia to the Turkish Mediterranean. Last December O'Brien told the Commons the £58m ECGD credit for the pipeline was worth the risk because the project was safe. *Whoops!*

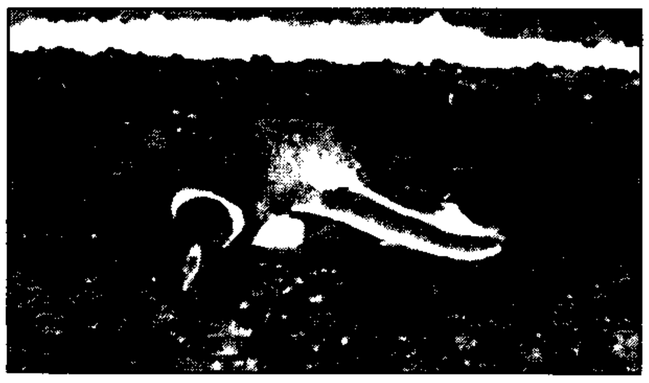
As the *Sunday Times* disclosed on 15 February, the BP-led consortium building the pipeline had not disclosed to the ECGD, as it should have done, that one of the project consultants, Derek Mortimore, had exposed a design fault connected with the selection of a weld coating for the pipeline, and that Mr Mortimore's warning had been vindicated when cracks appeared on the coating and work stopped in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

The *Sunday Times* revelation provoked a concerned letter to the minister from The Corner House, an environmental organisation based in Dorset. O'Brien's reply on 19 March could have been dictated by BP.

The consortium, he wrote, "did not inform the ECGD about the problems with the field joint coating material. I am told this was because both parties properly regard the testing and coating as a routine part of the pipeline construction process. The problems with the application of the coating were detected by the inspection regime in place on the pipeline, evidence that the monitoring regime is doing its job."

The ECGD duly underwrote 70 percent of the cost of the pipeline (£58m), and the banks, led by the rapacious Royal Bank of Scotland, poured money into the project in the certain knowledge that if anything goes wrong with the coating (or another environmental court case pending in Georgia), the taxpayer will fork out 70 percent of the damage. O'Brien can look forward to awkward questions from the industry select committee next month.

PS: The ECGD is now collecting money from Libya to "compensate" for any payments it may have made to contractors during the bad old days when President Gadaffi was a terrorist. This is great news for all the companies hoping to get contracts in Libya, led by AMEC plc, and for the advisory council of the ECGD, chaired by Liz Airey, director and shareholder of, er, AMEC plc.



P-p-pick up a p-p-penguin job

PUBLICITY generated by the daft attempt of the Falkland islands' government to oust penguin expert Mike Bingham has resulted in his being offered a new conservation job helping birds across South America.

Mr Bingham was refused a work permit in the Falklands after he revealed that 100,000 penguins had died of starvation due to over-fishing. The government openly stated that it rejected his application because he had "sought to discredit" it.

After a £60,000 court case last year, chief justice James Wood ruled that the government shouldn't have refused the permit and that it would have to "put up with opposition whether it likes it or not" (*Eye* 1093).

The publicity caused by the case brought Mr Bingham's research work to international attention and he has now been offered a new job. In a parting shot to the Falklands, he wrote to the islands' main newspaper, *Penguin News*, that he hoped the government would eventually "decide to catch up with the rest of the civilised world in terms of penguin protection, political honesty and human rights".

POLICE

Not fine

THE POLICE officer who drove his car at Sherman Thomas (*Eyes passim*), who was maimed for life when he was crushed against a brick wall, has been docked just 13 days' pay.

Thomas, a promising basketball player then aged 18, spent weeks in hospital and underwent a series of operations for a compound fracture, including skin grafts and the insertion of metal plates. Four years after the incident in Brixton, he still walks with a stick.

Thomas was chased by police who had believed that the young black man was riding a stolen moped. No charge was ever brought against Sherman over the bike, which he had borrowed from a friend. Transcripts of a conversation with the ambulance service revealed one unknown officer saying: "He's conscious and screaming, yeah, teach him to nick mopeds." In a subsequent conversation an ambulance service employee pointed out to a laughing policeman that it was not a funny issue.

Last week police driver PC Graham Knight was found guilty by a complaints panel of "being neglectful in the performance of his duties by using a police vehicle as a moving barrier in a way that caused severe injury to Sherman Thomas when neither police officers nor any member of the public were confronted by a life threatening risk justifying such action."

The 13-day pay fine has so outraged the community that many demonstrated outside Brixton police station, demanding the officer be sacked. Daniel Machover, Mr Thomas's solicitor, is meanwhile writing to the Met police to confirm that he will seek aggravated and exemplary damages in relation to its failure to dismiss the officer. He has also asked the crown prosecution service (CPS) to review its decision last year that there wasn't enough evidence to charge Knight with a criminal offence.

Watchdogged

THE NEW police watchdog launched on April Fool's day, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), has got off to a bad start.

IPCC chairman Nick Hardwick has already received an embarrassing letter from the family of Daniel Morgan, a private investigator who was murdered with an axe in 1987 while planning to expose police corruption. The family is protesting about the appointment of retired senior Scotland Yard detective Roy Clark as the IPCC's director of investigations.

When Clark was head of the Yard's anti-corruption squad, he oversaw a fourth failed investigation into Mr Morgan's murder. The Morgan family's letter complains about the terms Clark imposed on their right to see a previous report by Hampshire police into the murder. Clark asked the family to sign away their right to sue the police before having the report read to them (no family member was allowed to take notes). The family rejected these terms; and only after they threatened judicial review was the report made available.

The family would like to pursue all this with the IPCC but is deterred from doing so by the position of Mr Clark. "Given Mr Clark's aversion to full and open disclosure we have grave reservations about his position in an organisation reliant on transparency for public confidence," the letter asserts.

MPs Chris Smith and Roger Williams have written to the home secretary demanding a judicial inquiry into the Morgan murder on the ground that any hint of state involvement should be independently investigated.

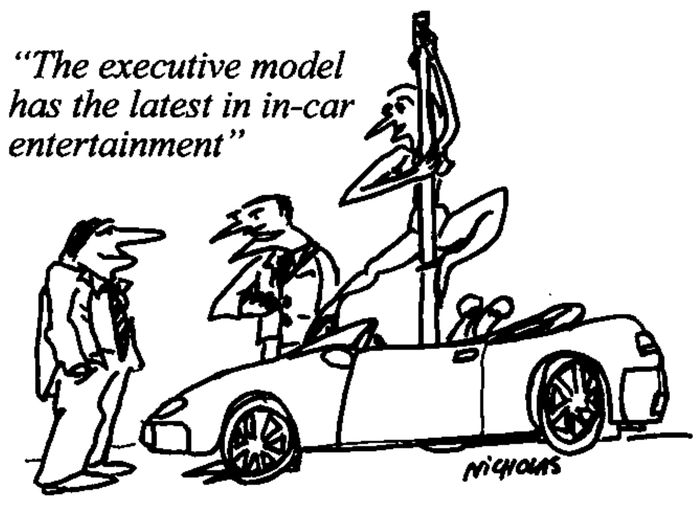
You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

"*YOU don't have to sell it to Wall Street. You are their regulator.*" This was the angry reaction of Wall Street nemesis Eliot Spitzer, the New York State attorney-general, to the negative response from those supposedly charged with regulating the masters of the universe when he began his campaign to clean up capitalism's biggest trough.

Told of his plans to stop analysts relentlessly "puffing" shares promoted by the investment banks and brokers they worked for, representatives of the New York stock exchange and the National Association of Securities Dealers had immediately expressed concern that they would be unable to "sell" Spitzer's proposal to their members.

It is hard to imagine Eliot Spitzer calling a meeting with those who made millions from the £12bn split capital trusts scandal to establish a compensation scheme for their victims and then meekly accepting the refusal to attend of most of those responsible for the scandal. Yet on this side of the pond that is exactly what John Tiner, the supposed new get-tough sheriff in town as chief executive of the financial services authority (FSA) has just done.



"The executive model has the latest in in-car entertainment"

A humiliated Tiner had to cancel his much publicised summit meeting last week with the 21 fund management groups who mis-sold "splits" as safe, low-to-no risk investments when most of the biggest offenders refused to attend. The reason? Some of those invited simply cannot afford the expected compensation bill.

Losses on the supposed low-risk zero coupon "splits" alone are estimated at more than £650m. Total losses could run into billions. Some 25 split capital trusts have had their shares suspended. More than 20 more have suspended dividend payments. Those who invested in income shares have on average lost half their money. Capital share investors have done even worse.

The recalcitrant guilty City "suits" are encouraged by suggestions that the FSA will drop its investigation into mis-selling while (for now) keeping its biggest stick, a two-year, largest ever investigation into the "magic circle" of fund managers who colluded to keep their sinking funds afloat by a secret policy of incestuous "you buy my shares-I buy yours".

But then, unlike the New York attorney-general, Tiner and the FSA believe in regulation by consent – just like the discredited New York stock exchange which is seeking to claw back the unconscionable $188m payments to its own chairman Richard Grasso, who is now also in Spitzer's sights.

Some 50,000 investors were enticed into "splits" sold mainly by fund managers Aberdeen Asset Management, brokers Brewin Dolphin, Collins Stewart and Hoare Govett and banks HSBC and UBS Warburg. For some of these groups the potential compensation bill could be financially crippling. This possibility of financial meltdown, it is believed, explains why there is so much reluctance to discuss a voluntary compensation scheme with the FSA, especially by those with the most to both pay and lose.

This hard line is being encouraged by lawyers representing the guilty "suits" who have to take the blame. They say that to agree to a voluntary scheme would be to admit liability and open the door to a tidal wave of compensation claims. A prospect already there as a result of a recent award by the financial ombudsman.

The lawyers for those responsible also suspect that the FSA has a weak hand which is why it is trying "jaw-jaw" not "war-war" to persuade the managers to pay up and is signalling that it may drop the mis-selling case. The FSA could threaten to prosecute first and compensate later – the Spitzer method. But the FSA is afraid of its own, never mind everyone else's, lawyers' shadow and so routinely runs from a confrontation with the City big guns. Constantly unnerved by the threat of legal challenges and being sued, it increasingly resembles the dog that only barks at those it does not fear.

The FSA prosecution position is further weakened by the fact that it never spotted the "splits" mis-selling and "magic circle" scandal until it was far too late. Indeed its own website promoted splits as "lower risk" and continued to do so for several months after it began its investigation! A potential fatal weakness in any mis-selling case.

Tiner too failed miserably to react when in charge of the consumer, investment and insurance directorate. Yes, "splits" happened on his watch. Which makes it hard to come down on firms he defended before the Commons treasury committee in 2001 telling MPs "there was little evidence that private investors had been mis-sold shares in split trusts".

Even after beginning its biggest ever investigation, Tiner still insisted to MPs in May 2002 that only a "handful" of fund managers had been colluding to prop up their trusts' share prices. It is investigating cross-holdings between 120 trusts involving at least 12 fund managers. There are hours of taped conversations proving the collusion. No wonder the lawyers tell Aberdeen and their allies to hang tough with the FSA.

This attitude is also being encouraged by the insurers who provide fidelity cover for the City firms involved. They could be at risk for a large slice of any compensation. But only if it could be shown that the directors did not know what the fund managers were doing and selling. That could be a hard trick to perform. Especially if the companies enter a plea agreement with the FSA. That could mean the companies would have to foot the multi-million bill entirely.

Despite these factors the 21 "splits" sellers are themselves split into three camps. Some of the smaller players are keen to settle. So too are some of the medium sized and even bigger firms who want to bring the matter to an end. But the worst offenders, not surprisingly, see they have nothing to lose from telling Tiner to FSA off.

With its bluff now called and talk that it will drop any charges of mis-selling, the City regulator will have to decide whether to abandon the compensation plan and press ahead to prosecute for deception and market manipulation those "magic circle" members most responsible, as well as seek to ban several key individuals. That alone could force the guilty to the table. If it does not, the victims of the "splits" scandal could have a long wait for compensation.

WHILE attention has focused on its activities in Italy, Bank of America in London may have an increasing number of questions to answer over the bank's extensive involvement in the £7bn Parmalat fraud. Italian investigators have already identified three past or present officials of BoA's Milan office as potential targets of their investigation into the bankrupt food group as well as the bank's Italian branch.

BoA raised more than $700m for Parmalat between 1997 and 2002. It also helped create certain of the offshore structures which allowed Parmalat to hide its ever-growing losses and the siphoning of money into Tanzi family ventures. The bank has already written off more than $200m from its own loans and derivatives linked to Parmalat.

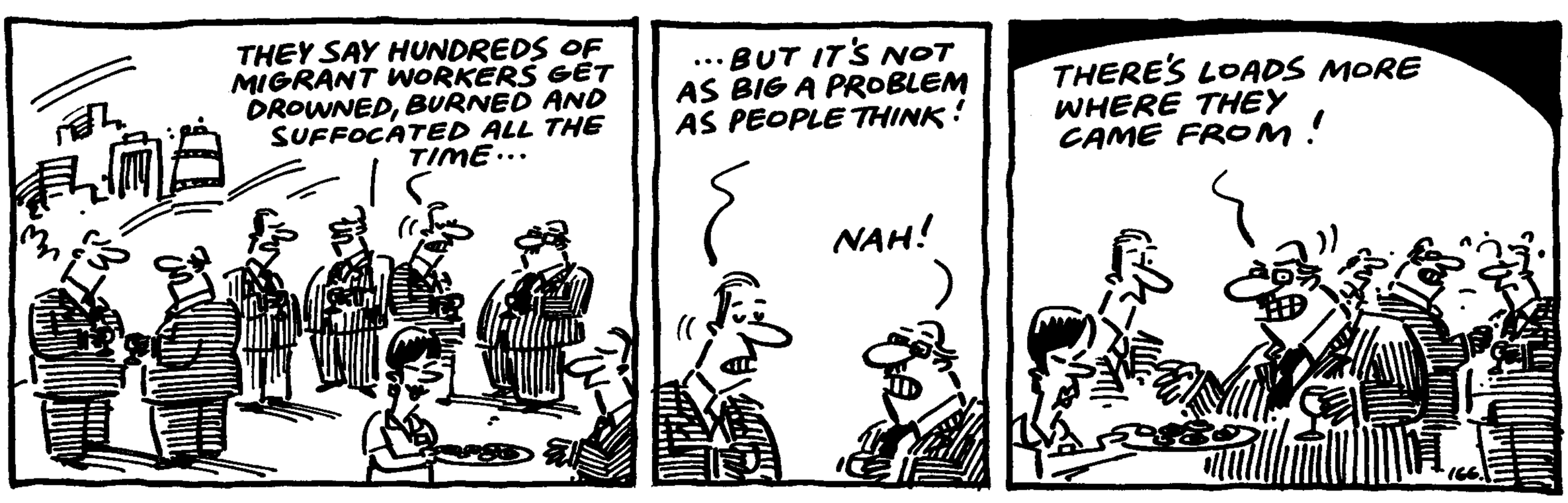
But this is far from a local problem for BoA as the Milan office was directly under the control and compliance regulation of the bank in London. Officials in London were involved in discussions with Parmalat executives in the run up to the fraud being exposed last December when a $5bn deposit at BoA in New York was exposed as a fiction.

BoA internal investigators have been in London examining the bank's records and interviewing officials. With one senior Italian former BoA executive under arrest and cooperating with prosecutors, two other current executives fired because they are likely to be arrested and a fourth under investigation, just what they told their bosses in London could be crucial to assessing the bank's exposure to civil or even criminal action.

At the very least it would seem that BoA officials in London were not paying sufficient attention to what was going on in the Milan office, never mind checking into the fantasy finances of its client Parmalat.

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG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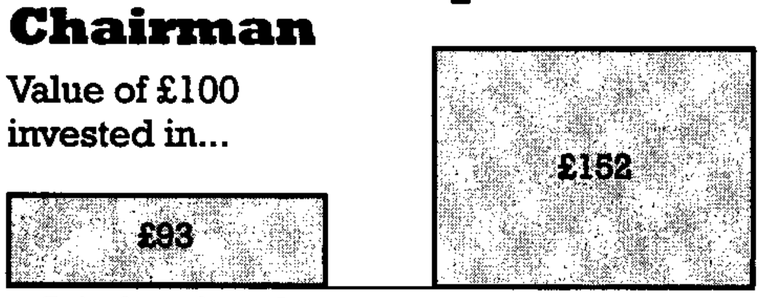
NAH!
THERE'S LOADS MORE WHERE THEY CAME FROM!

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

As Sainsbury's chief executive Sir Peter Davis moves up to Chairman



JUST how gigantic a fraud was Imperial Consolidated has been revealed in a report produced for creditors by the joint liquidators at a meeting last month in Grenada where the main IC Mutual fund was based.

Accountants Steven Wood (of Mazars Neville Russell who are administrators for Imperial Consolidated) and Marcus Wide have discovered that Imperial's two unlikely lads, former hotel barmen Jared Brook and Lincoln Fraser – helped substantially by others such as South African accountant Bill Godley – attracted just under $390m from some 3,000 investors around the globe between 1998 and 2002.

Imperial was a classic "Ponzi" scheme and paid back old investors $138m in repayments and dividends from new investors' money. Of the remaining $250m, so far only $16m has been recovered.

Even more remarkable is the fact that it emerges that only $78m was ever invested in income producing assets in Britain as promised by the funds' sales literature. The rest went largely into the pockets of Brook and Fraser, their associates and those who introduced them to their victims. Some $29m was paid as commissions to introducers. The rates of commission ranged from 4 percent to 29 percent.

The biggest victim was a Japanese company which invested $24m. Other investors were in the Middle East, Spain and the United States where the FBI now has an interest. Japan was a happy hunting ground for Imperial, which is why the Serious Farce Office recently arrested its main man there. He, along with Brook and Fraser, is on police bail until July. The SFO is expected to bring charges either later this year or early next based largely on the deception shown by the stark difference between what investors were told was going to happen to their money and what did.

But there could be a number of financial institutions who will become increasingly uneasy about their involvement with Imperial. Some $50m was invested through an association with intermediaries like Allied Dunbar, Irish Life and Scottish Mutual who provided "wrap-a-round" financial packages linked to the Imperial funds. These were described by Allied Dunbar as "lower risk" – despite the fact that Imperial was not authorised by the FSA to sell investments!

The FSA has finally woken up to the fact that it cannot hide behind that fiction given that Imperial operated from Binbrook in Lincolnshire and then Mayfair, both addresses within its regulatory remit. It is now said to be trailing after the SFO looking at the role of Imperial and its UK intermediaries.

Girobank, which, along with Rabobank in Holland, handled the transfer of investors' cash, could also be in the frame for civil action. Ansbacher has already been sued over its role as custodian for Imperial funds in the Bahamas.

Meanwhile former Imperial acolytes are said to be behind yet another version of the scam being touted in Spain under the guise of the Alpha Bond scheme said to offer 8 percent to investors while investing supposedly in British government securities.

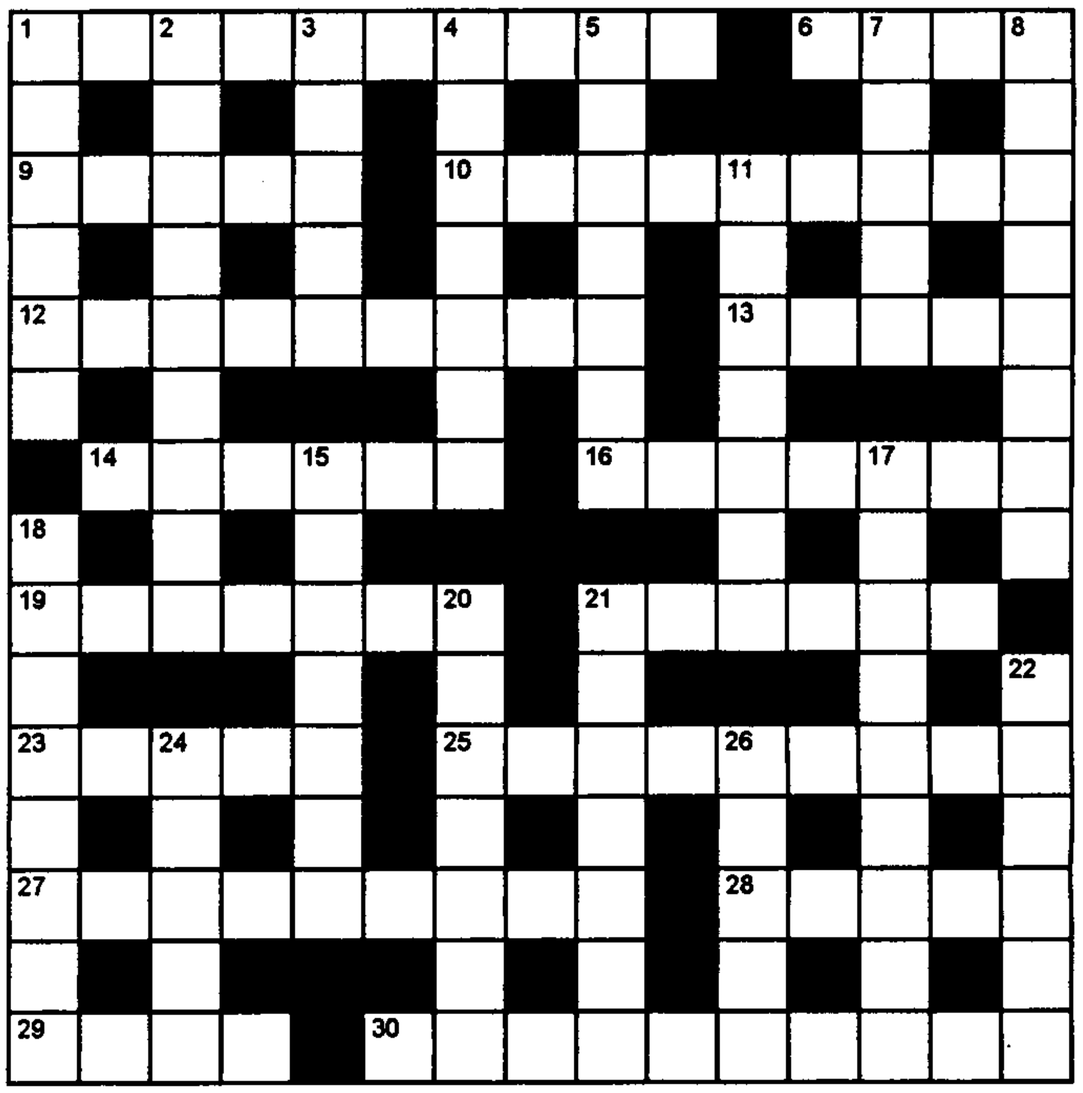
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 259

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 23 April 2004.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1/6 Livingstone's pride and joy, wherein our phlegmatic nature? (10,4)
9 Blair without leader of union team's backing – shambles (3-2)
10 Voting to swap political factions? They're up for it! (9)
12 The right bar for bathroom hang-ups? (5,4)
13 Castrated male-female coupling with a male: it gives relief (5)
14 Bad-tempered, having a pubic infestation? (6)
16 The dog's bollocks: old PM almost in front (3,4)
19 Bit players gobbled by queer model (7)
21 Sensual, randy Alan Clark, dismissing a heartless leak (6)
23 Universal involved in dirty film about discharge (5)
25 Aroused in the club (7,2)
27 "Bilious" organ's complaint irritates matey Blair (9)
28 Vulgar woman, getting fewer "rides" than an 'A' type? (5)
29 Brown: "***k Vat!" (4)
30 "Evidence of excessively tight supporters" – newspaper headings (10)

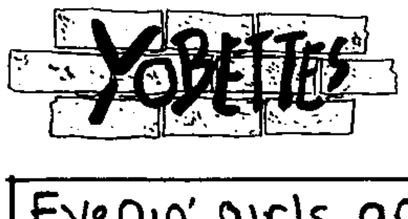
DOWN

1 Recover from knockout orgasm and turn over (4,2)
2 N-no longer couple at length in the road hereafter (4,5)
3 Put out part of pelvis after uninitiated sex (5)
4 Treatment of those people stuck without monotonous pop? (7)
5 Extension where 'beer belly' hangs out (7)
7 Spasmodic, so no post-coital cuddle? (2-3)
8 Semen clumsy Bill emptied on hem of aide's costume (8)
11 The Northern arsehole's type of racing horse (7)
15 Assert "ruination" after onset of boom and bust (7)
17 Unable to sit still with an erection, Dan sadly not operational (2,3,4)
18 Despised Brit abroad gets to clean up Cyclops's clueing finally? Just the thing! (5,3)
20 Assassinate court (4,3)
21 House taken in by devious Clare's complaint (7)
22 Private Eye's suit (6)
24 Colonel Oliver North heads for Central American city (5)
26 Ken Livingstone, awful balls up initially, bemused the capital (5)

Crossword 258 winner: MARTIN BUXTON

ACROSS: 1 Costs 4 Castrated 9 Tornado 10 Unfound 11 Dumbed down 12 Phew 14 Swamped 16 Sermon 18 Cannes 20 Nominee 22 Tits 23 Big Brother 26 Kosygin 27 Knights 28 Reality TV 29 Times.

DOWN: 1 City desk 2 Scram 3 Sea serpent 4 Crowded 5 Squawks 6 Rift 7 Touchdown 8 Do down 13 Trombonist 15 Anastasia 17 Neurosis 19 Spinney 20 Nabokov 21 Stoker 24 Ho-hum 25 Ugli.



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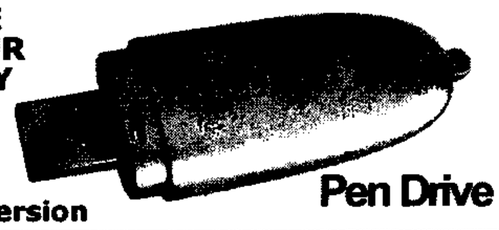

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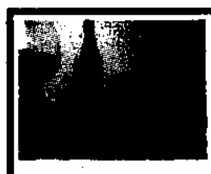

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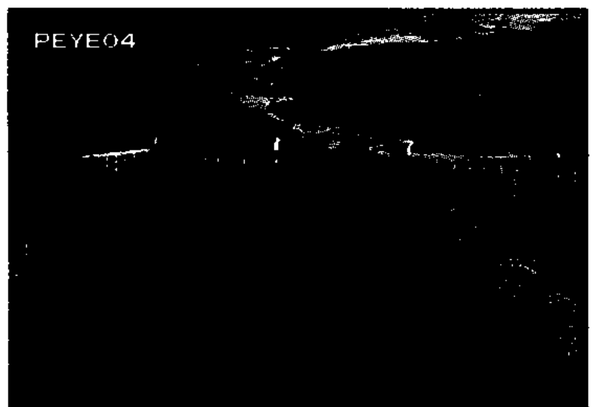

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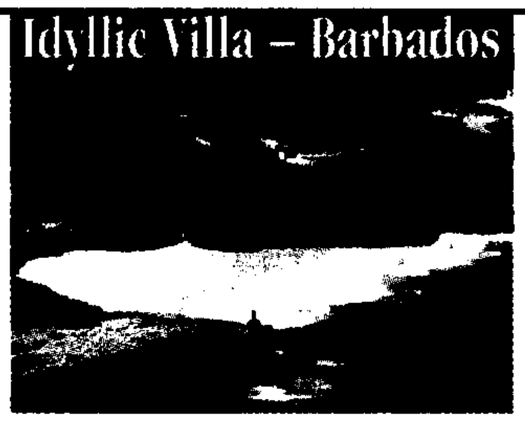

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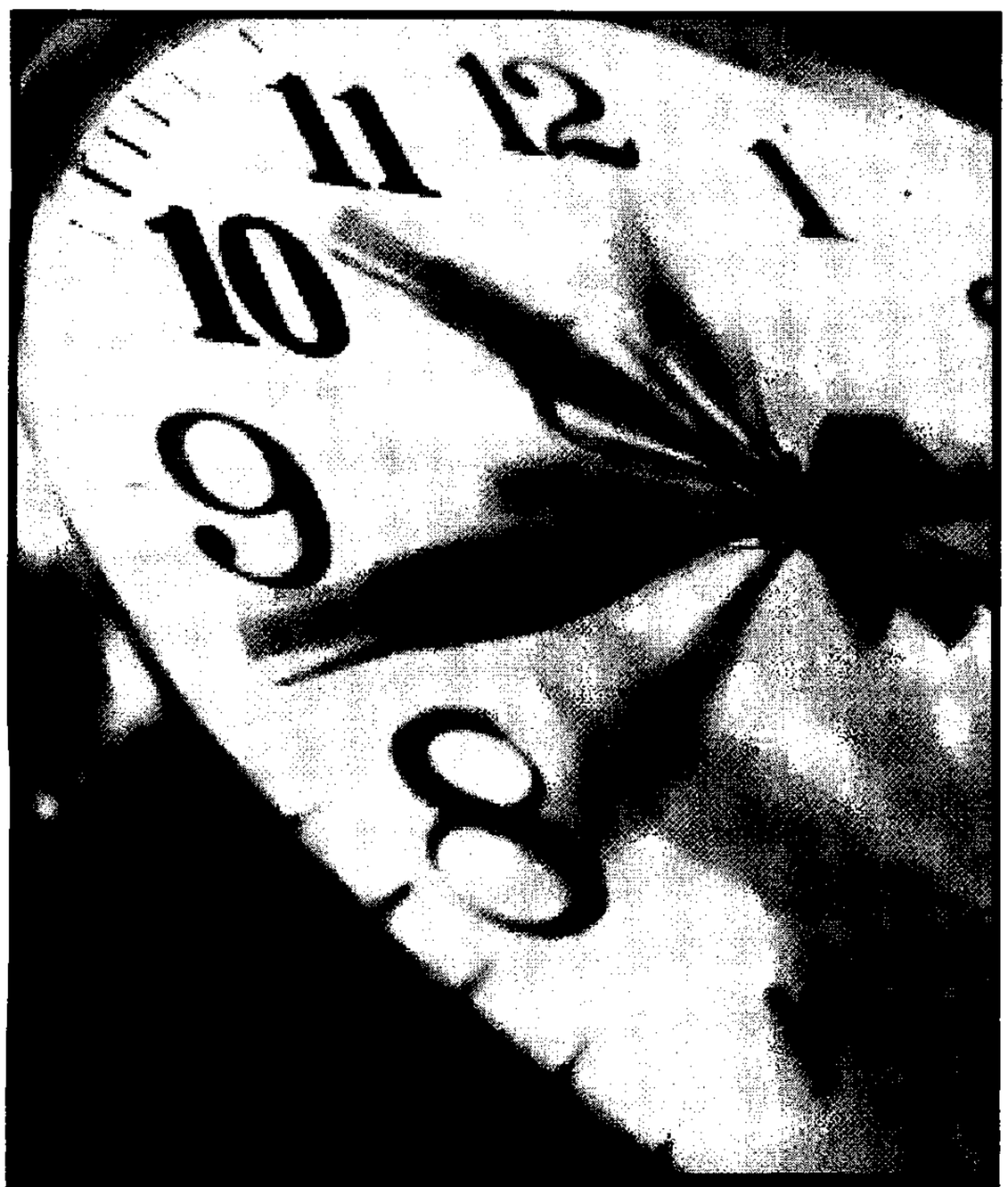

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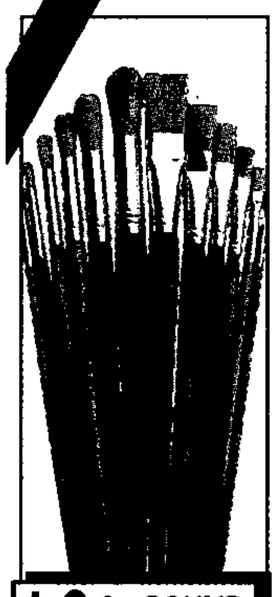

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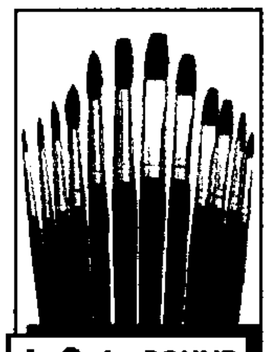

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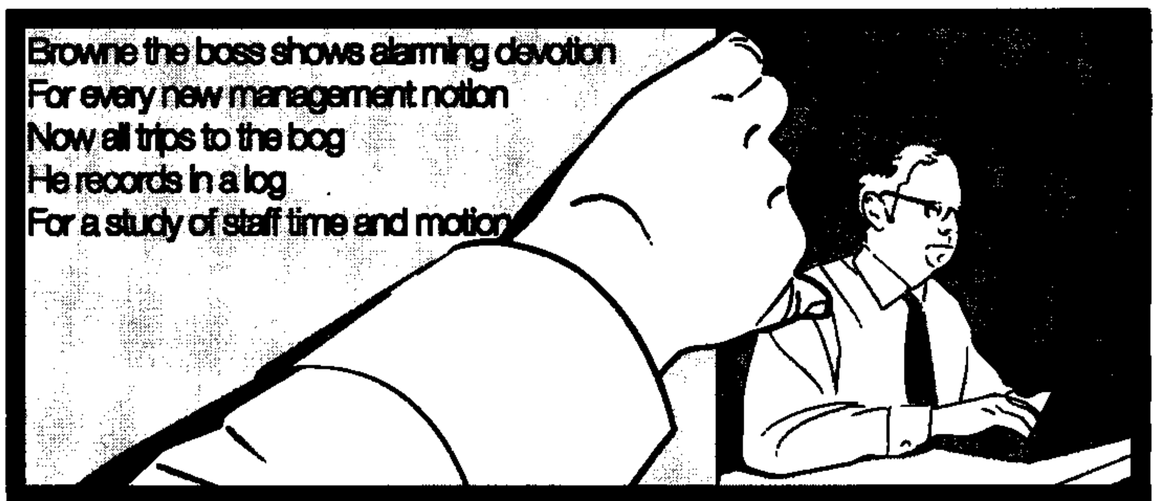
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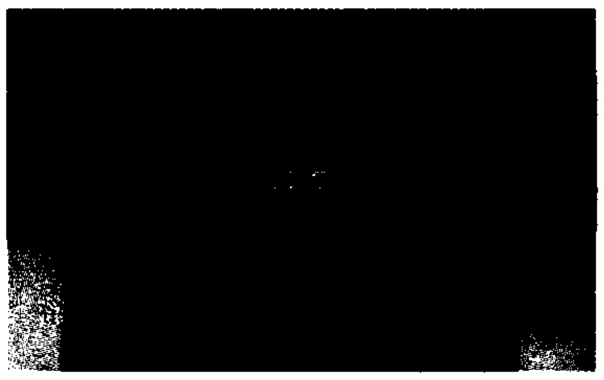

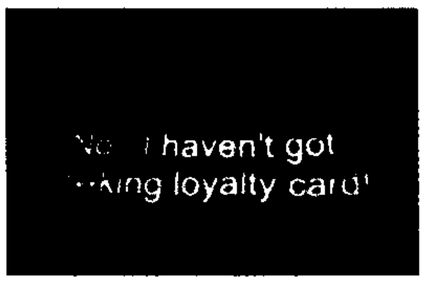

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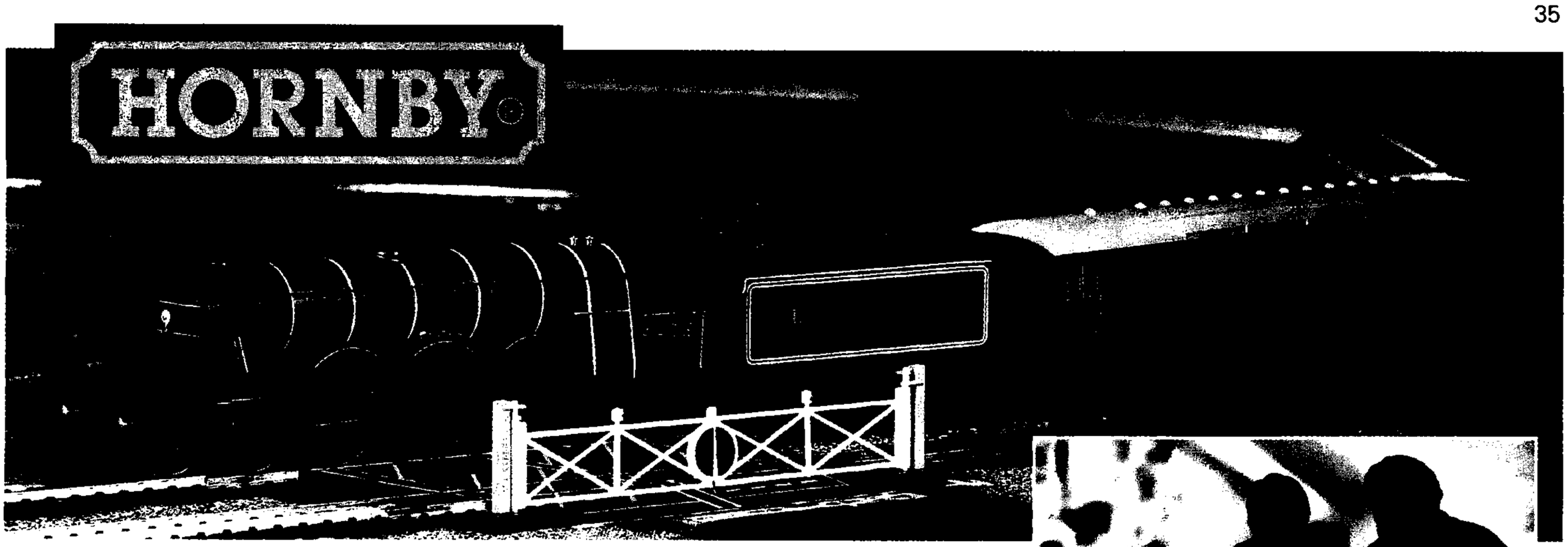

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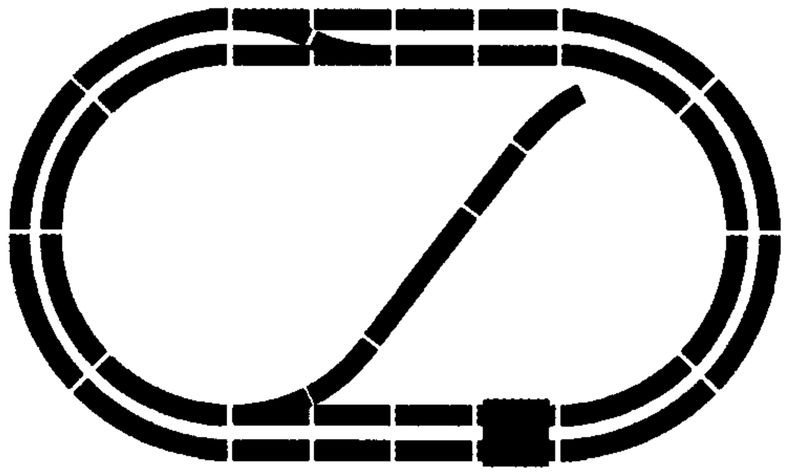

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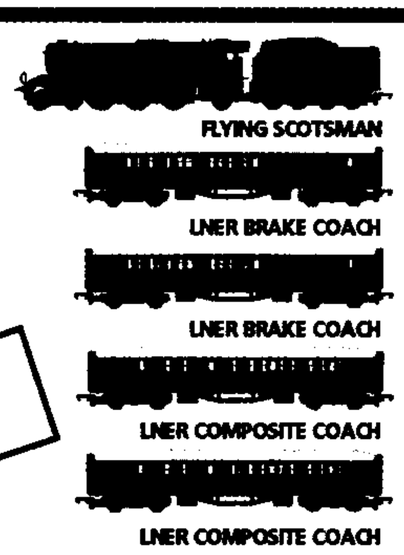

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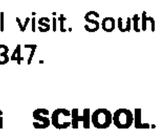

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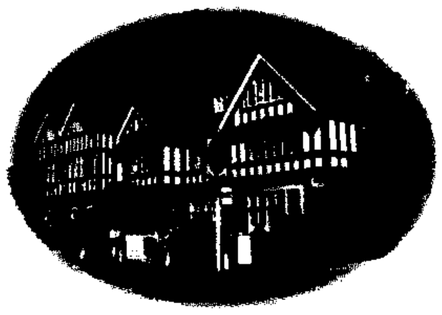

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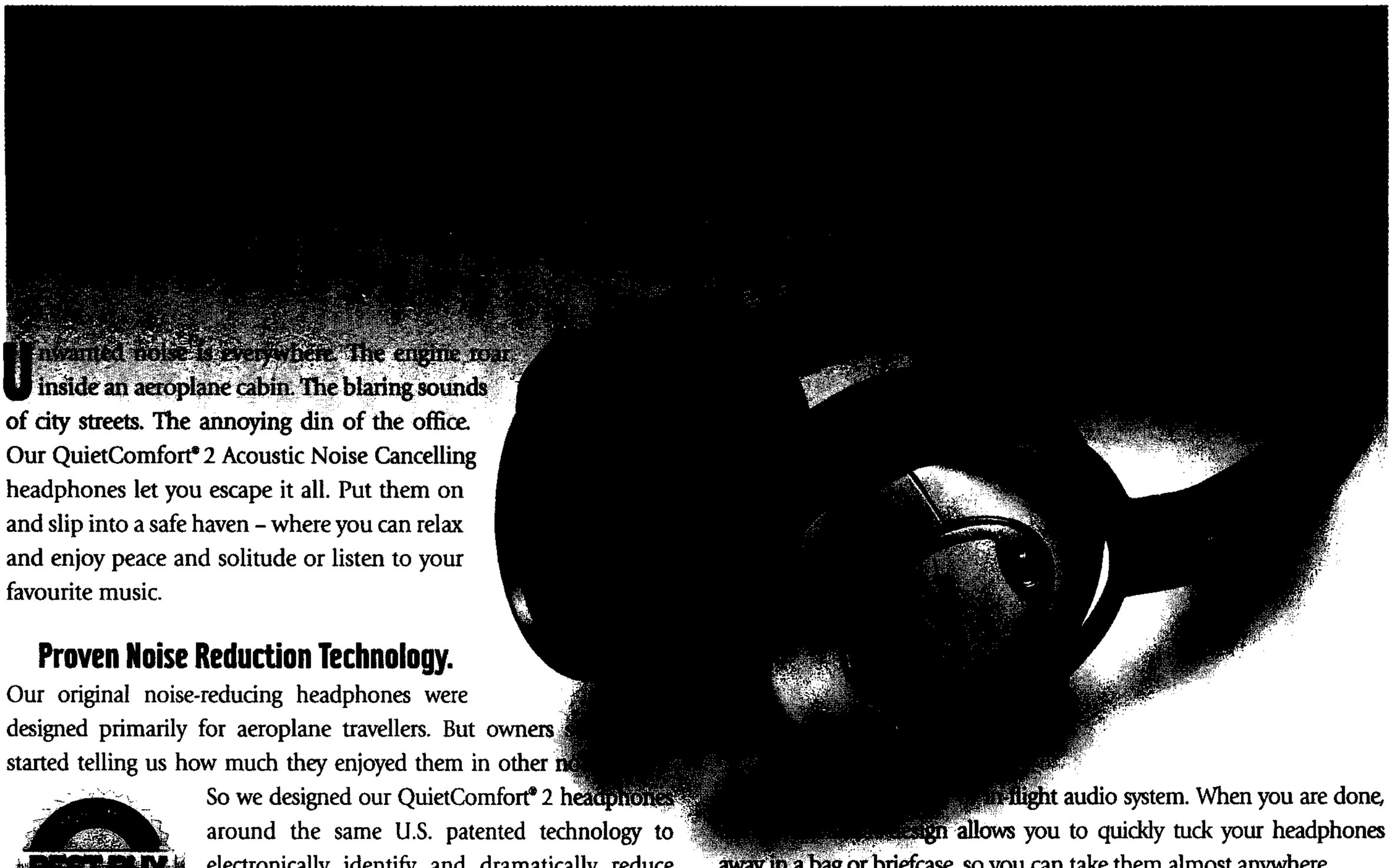

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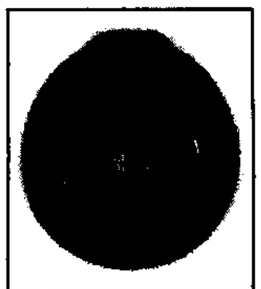

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